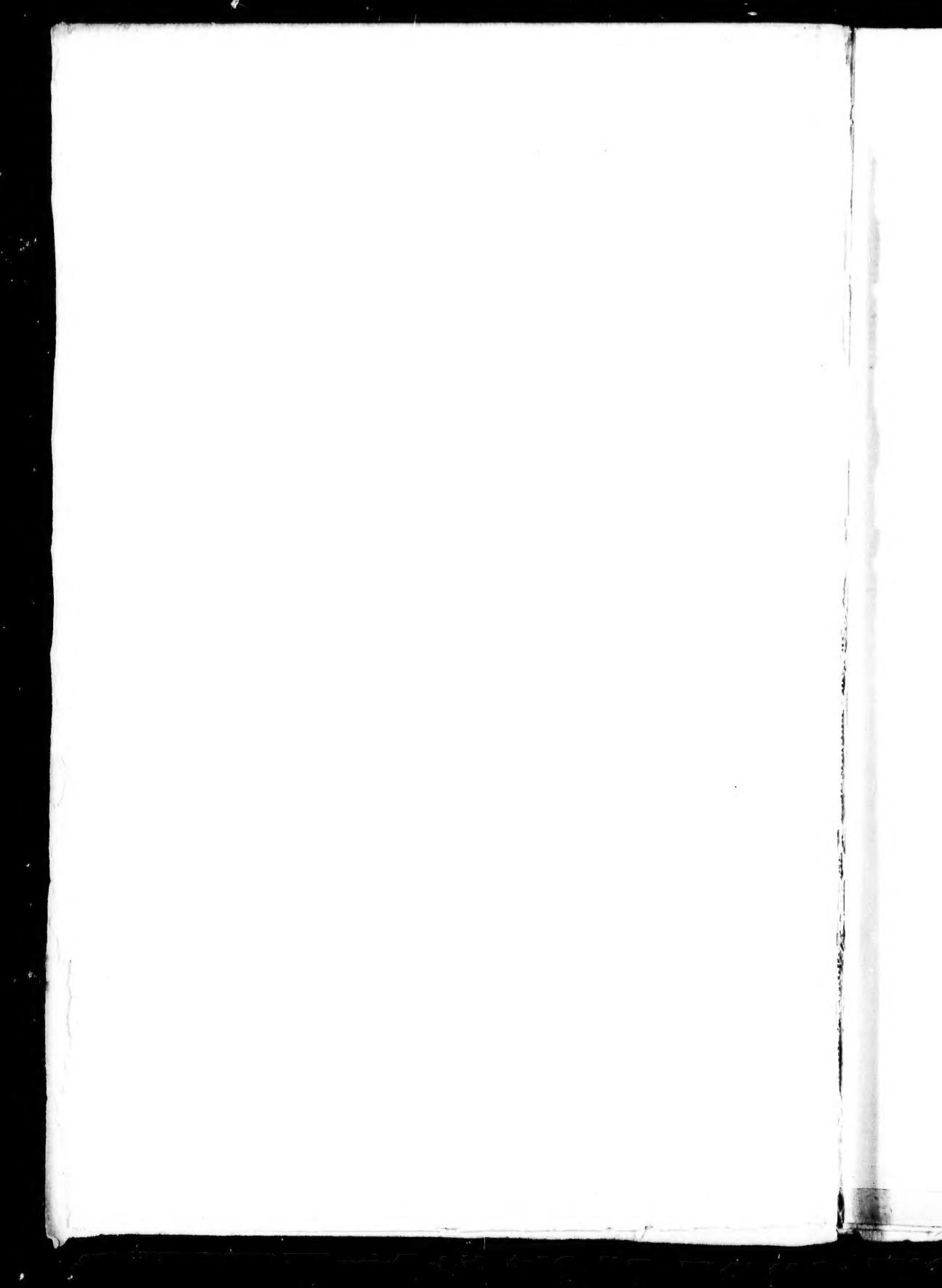
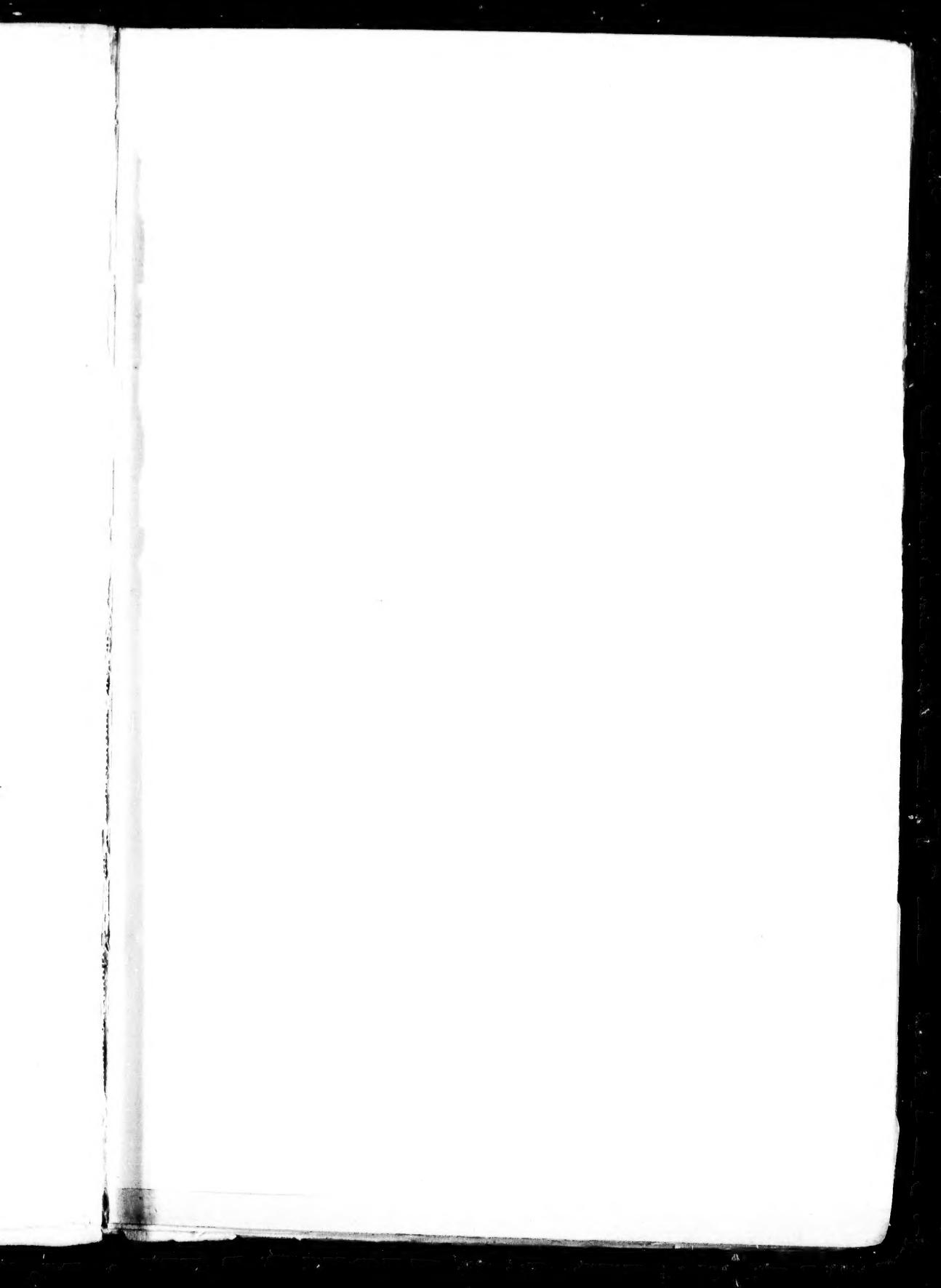
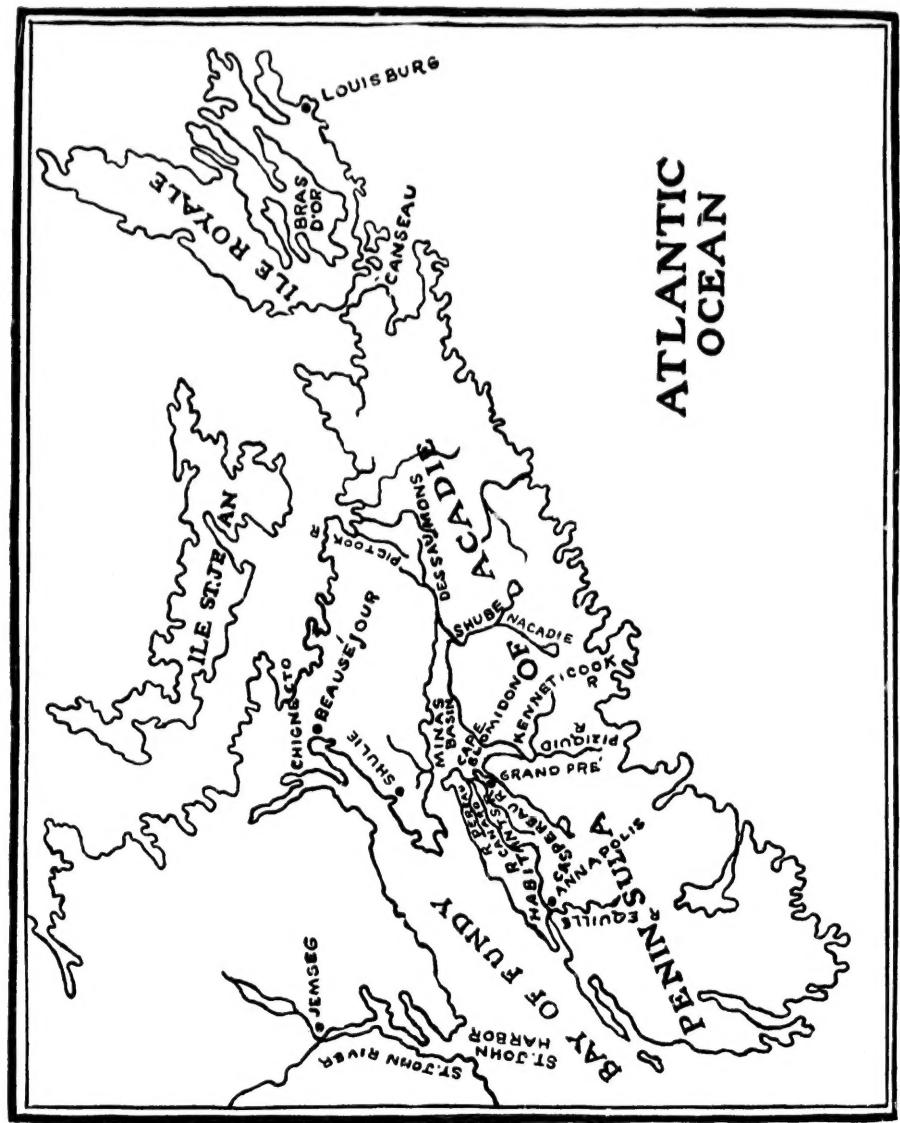


A Sister to Evangeline





ATLANTIC OCEAN



A Sister to Evangeline

*Being the Story of Yvonne de Lamourie,
and how she went into exile with
the villagers of Grand Pré*

By

Charles G. D. Roberts

Author of *The Forge in the Forest, A History of Canada,*
Earth's Enigmas, New York Nocturnes, &c.

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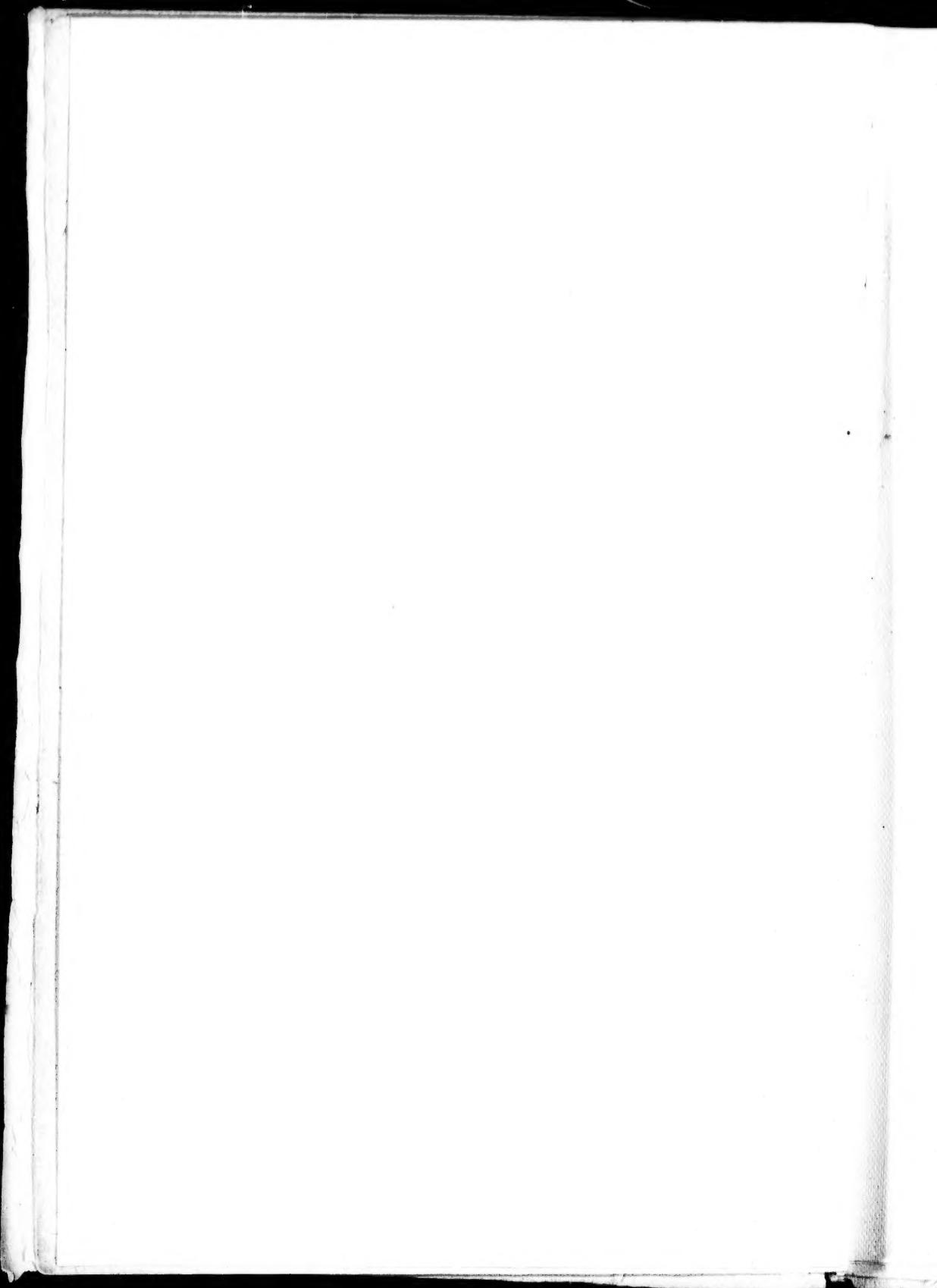
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To
MY MOTHER
EMMA WETMORE BLISS ROBERTS



Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	Paul Grande's Home-coming to Grand Pré,	1
II.	Grûl's Warning	11
III.	Charms and Counter-charms	15
IV.	"Habet!"	23
V.	The Black Abbé Defers	31
VI.	A New England Englishman	36
VII.	Guard!	43
VIII.	The Moon in the Apple-bough	50
IX.	In Sleep a King; but Waking, no such Matter	58
X.	A Grand Pré Morning	66
XI.	Father Fafard	77
XII.	Le Fûret at the Ferry	87
XIII.	Unwilling to be Wise	94
XIV.	Love Me, Love My Dog	100
XV.	Ashes as it were Bread	105
XVI.	The Way of a Maid	112
XVII.	Memory is a Child	117
XVIII.	For a Little Summer's Sleep	125
XIX.	The Borderland of Life	135

Chapter		Page
XX.	But Mad Nor-nor-west	142
XXI.	Beauséjour, and After	149
XXII.	Grûl's Case	156
XXIII.	At Gaspereau Lower Ford	161
XXIV.	"If you love me, leave me"	168
XXV.	Over Gaspereau Ridge	177
XXVI.	The Chapel Prison	182
XXVII.	Dead Days and Withered Dreams	191
XXVIII.	The Ships of her Exile	200
XXIX.	The Hour of her Desolation	208
XXX.	A Woman's Privilege	218
XXXI.	Young Will and Old Wisdom	229
XXXII.	Aboard the "Good Hope"	238
XXXIII.	The Divine Right of Queens	246
XXXIV.	The Soul's Supremer Sense	254
XXXV.	The Court in the Cabin	260
XXXVI.	Sword and Silk	268
XXXVII.	Fire in Ice	279
XXXVIII.	Of Long Felicity Brief Word	285

Page
142
149
156
161
168
177
182
191
200
208
218
229
238
246
254
260
268
279
285

A Sister to Evangeline

Chapter I

Paul Grande's Home-coming to Grand Pré

"**R**EVENANT à la Belle Acadie"—the words sang themselves over and over in my brain, but I could get no further than that one line, try as I might. I felt that it was the beginning of a song which, if only I could imprison it in my rhyme, would stick in the hearts of our men of Acadie, and live upon their lips, and be sung at every camp and hearth fire, as "*À la Claire Fontaine*" is sung by the *voyageurs* of the St. Lawrence. At last I perceived, however, that the poem was living itself out at that moment in my heart, and did not then need the half-futile expression that words at best can give. But I did put it into words at a later day, when at last I found myself able to set it apart and view it with clear eyes; and you shall judge, maybe, when I come to put my verses into print, whether I suc-

ceeded in making the words rhyme fairly and the volatile syllables march at measured pace. The art of verse has never been much practised among us Acadians, and it is a matter of some pride to me that I, a busy soldier, now here at Grand Pré and anon at Mackinaw or Natchez, taking in my hand my life more often than a pen, should have mastered even the rudiments of an art so lofty and exacting.

So, for awhile, "Home again to Acadie the Fair" was all that I could say.

It was surely enough. I had come over from Piziquid afoot, by the upper trail, and now, having crossed the Gaspereau where it narrows just above tide-water, I had come out upon the spacious brow of the hill that overlooks Grand Pré village.

Not all my wanderings had shown me another scene so wonderful as that wide prospect. The vale of the Five Rivers lay spread out before me, with Grand Pré, the quiet metropolis of the Acadian people, nestling in her apple-bloom at my feet. There was the one long street, thick-set with its wide-eaved gables, and there its narrow subsidiary lane descending from the slopes upon my left. Near the angle rose the spire of the village church, glittering like gold in the clear flood of the sunset. And everywhere the dear apple-blossoms. For it was spring in Acadie when I came home.

Beyond the village and its one black wharf my eyes ranged the green, wind-ruffled marshes, safe behind the sodded circumvallations of their dykes. Past the dykes, on either side of "the island's" wooded rampart, stretched the glowing miles of the flats; for the tides of Minas were at ebb. How red in the sunset, molten copper threaded with fire, those naked reaches gleamed that night! Their color was like a blare of trumpets challenging the peace of the Five Rivers.

Past the flats, smooth and dazzling to the eye at such a distance, lay the waters of Minas. Well I knew how their unsleeping eddies boiled and seethed about the grim base of Blomidon. Such tricks does memory serve one that even across that wide tranquillity I seemed to hear the depredating clamour of those tides upon the shingle.

Though it was now two years since I had seen the gables and apple-trees of Grand Pré, I was in no haste to descend into the village. There came a sudden sinking at my heart, as my heart inquired, with unseasonable pertinence, by what right I continued to call Grand Pré "home"? The thought was new to me; and that I might fairly consider it I seated myself upon the broad stump of a birch-tree, felled the preceding winter.

By far the smaller portion of my life had been spent in the Acadian village — only my early boyhood, before the years of schooling at Quebec;

and afterwards the fleeting sweetness of some too brief visits, that lay in my memory like pools of enchanted leisure in a desert of emulous contentions. My father, tenderest and bravest of all men that I have known, rested in an unmarked grave beside the northern wash of the Peribonca. My uncle, Jean de Mer, Sieur de Briart, was on the Ohio, fighting the endless battle of France in the western wildernesses. His one son, my one cousin, the taciturn but true-hearted Marc, was with his father, spending himself in the same quarrel. I thought with a longing tenderness of these two — the father full of high faith in the triumph of New France, the son fighting obstinately in what he held a lost cause, caring mainly that his father still had faith in it. I wished mightily that their brave hands could clasp mine in welcome back to Grand Pré. I thought of their two fair New England wives, left behind at Quebec to shame by their gay innocence the corruption of Bigot's court. Kindred I had none in Grand Pré, unless one green grave in the churchyard could be called my kin — the grave wherein my mother's girlish form and laughing eyes had been laid to sleep while I was yet a child.

Yes, I had no kinsfolk to greet me back to Grand Pré; no roof of mine that I should call it home. But friends, loyal friends, would welcome me, I knew. There was Father Fafard, the firm

and gentle old priest, to whom, of course, I should go just as if I were of his flesh and blood. Then there were the De Lamouries —

Yes, to be sure, the De Lamouries. And here I took myself by the chin and laughed. I know that, for all my verses, I am in the main a soldier, yet I am so far a poet as to suffer myself to befool myself at times, and get a passing satisfaction out of it. But I always face the fact before I express it in act. I acknowledged to myself that I had been thinking of the De Lamouries' pleasant farmhouse, and of somewhat that it contained, when I sang "Home again to Acadie the Fair."

I remembered with a pleasant warmth the tall, bent figure, fierce eyes, and courtly air of Giles de Lamourie, the broken gentleman, who through much misfortune and some fault had fallen from a high place at Versailles and been fain to hide himself on an Acadian farm. I thought also of Madame, his wife, a wizened little woman with nothing left, said the villagers, to remind one of the loveliness which had once dazzled Louis himself. To me she seemed an amazingly interesting woman, whose former beauty could still be guessed from its ruins.

Both of these good people I remembered with a depth of concern far beyond the deserts of such casual friendlinesses as they had shown me. As I looked down toward their spacious apple-

orchard, on the furthest outskirts of the village, it was borne in upon me that they had one claim to distinction beyond all others.

They had achieved Yvonne.

Many a time had I wondered how my cousin Marc could have had eyes for his ruddy-haired Puritan lily when there was Yvonne de Lamourie in the world. On my last two visits to Grand Pré I had seen her; not many times, indeed, nor much alone; and never word of love had passed between us. In truth, I had not known that I loved her in those days. I had taken a wondering delight in her beauty and her wit, but of the pretty trifles of compliment and the careless gallantries that so often simulate love I had offered her none at all. This surprised me the more afterward, as women had ever found me somewhat lavish in such light coin. I think I was withheld by the great love unrealized in my heart, which found expression then only in such white reverence as the devotee proffers to his saint. I think, too, I was restrained by the consciousness of a certain girl at Trois Pistoles on the St. Lawrence, who, if I might believe my vanity, loved me, and to whom, if I might believe my conscience, I had given some sort of claim upon my honor. I cared naught for the girl. I had never intended anything but a light and passing affair; but somehow it had not seemed to me light when Yvonne de

Lamourie's eyes were upon me. A little afterward, revisiting Trois Pistoles on my way to the western lakes, I had found the maiden married to a prosperous trader of Quebec. In the leaping joy that seized my heart at the news I perceived how my fetters had galled; and I knew then, though at first but dimly, that if anywhere in the world there awaited me such a love as I had dreamed of sleeping, but ever doubted waking,—the love that should be not a pastime, but a prayer, not an episode, but an eternity,—it awaited me in Grand Pré village.

In my heart these two years I had carried two clear visions of my mistress. Strange to tell, they were not bedimmed by the much handling which they had endured. They but seemed to grow the brighter and fresher from being continually pressed to the kisses of my soul.

In one of these I saw her as she stood a certain morning in the orchard, prying with insistent little finger-tips into the heart of a young apple-flower, while I watched and said nothing. I know not to this day whether she were thinking of the apple-flower or wondering at the dumbness of her cavalier; but she feigned, at least, to concern herself with only the blossom's heart. Her wide white lids downcast over her great eyes, her long lashes almost sweeping the roundure of her cheek, she looked a Madonna. The broad, low fore-

head; the finely chiselled nose, not too small for strength of purpose; the full, firm chin—all added to this sweet dignity, which was of a kind to compel a lover's worship. There was enough breadth to the gracious curve below the ear to make me feel that this girl would be a strong man's mate. But the mouth, a bow of tenderness, with a wilful dimple at either delectable corner always lurking, spoke her all woman, too laughing and loving to spend her days in sainthood. Her hair—very thick and of a purply-bronze, near to black—lay in a careless fulness over her little ears. On her head, though in all else she affected the dress of the Grand Pré maids, she wore not the Acadian linen cap, but a fine shawl of black Spanish lace, which became her mightily. Her bodice was of linen homespun, coarse, but bleached to a creamy whiteness; and her skirt, of the same simple stuff, was short after the Acadian fashion, so that I could see her slim ankles, and feet of that exceeding smallness and daintiness which may somehow tread right heavily upon a man's heart.

The other vision cherished in my memory was different from this, and even more enchanting. It was a vision of one look cast upon me as I left the door of her father's house. In the radiance of her great eyes, turned full upon me, all else became indistinct, her other features blurred, as it

were, with the sudden light of that look, which meant—I knew not what. Indeed, it was ever difficult to observe minutely the other beauties of her face as long as the eyes were turned upon one, so clear an illumination from her spirit shone within their lucid deeps. Hence it was, I suppose, that few could agree as to the colour of those eyes—the many calling them black, others declaring with confidence that they were brown, while some even, who must have angered her, averred them to be of a very cold dark grey. I, for my part, knew that they were of a greenish hazel of indescribable depth, with sometimes amber lights in them, and sometimes purple shadows very mysterious and unfathomable.

As I sat now looking down into the village I wondered if Yvonne would have a welcome for me. As I remembered, she had ever shown goodwill toward me, so far as consisted with maidenly reserve. She had seemed ever ready for tales of my adventure, and even for my verses. As I thought of it there dawned now upon my heart a glimmering hope that there had been in that last unforget-ten look of hers more warmth of meaning than maid Yvonne had been willing to confess.

This thought went to my heart and I sprang up in a kind of sudden intoxication, to go straight-way down into the village. As I did so I caught the flutter of a white frock among the trees of the

De Lamourie orchard. Thereupon my breath came with a quickness that was troublesome, and to quiet it I paused, looking out across the marshes and the tide toward Blomidon. Then for the first time I observed a great bank of cloud that had arisen behind the Cape. It was black and menacing, ragged and fiery along its advancing crest. Its shadow lay already upon the marshes and the tide. It crept smoothly upon the village. And at this moment, from the skirts of a maple grove on the summit of the hill behind me, came a great and bell-like voice, crying:

“ Woe, woe to Acadie the Fair, for the hour of her desolation cometh ! ”

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Chapter II

Grûl's Warning

"THESE ten years," I exclaimed to myself angrily (for I love not to have a dream rudely broken), "has Grûl been prophesying woe; and I see not that aught comes of it save greater strength to his lungs."

I turned my back upon the valley and watched the singular figure that drew near. It was a shrewd and mysterious madman whom all Acadie had known for the past ten years as "Grûl." Whether that was his real name or a pseudonym of his own adoption no one knew. Whence he had come no one knew. Wherefore he stayed in Acadie, and so faithfully prophesied evil to our fair land, no one knew. The reason of his madness — and the method which sometimes seemed to lurk beneath it — no one could confidently guess. At least, such ignorance in regard to this fantastic fool seemed general throughout the country. But there lay here and there a suspicion that the Black Abbé, the indomitable La Garne, Bigot's tool and

the people's dread, knew more of Grûl's madness than other folk might dream. It was whispered that La Garne, who seemingly feared no man else, feared Grûl. It was certain that whenever any scheme of the Black Abbé's came to naught Grûl's hand would appear somewhere in the wreck of it.

Now, as he came down from the maple grove, he looked and was dressed just as I had seen him years before. The vicissitudes of time and of the weather seemed to have as little effect upon the staring black and yellow of his woollen cloak as upon his iron frame, his piercing light-blue eyes, the snowy tangle of his hair and beard. Only his pointed cap betrayed that its wearer dwelt not altogether beyond the pale of mutability. Its adornments seemed to recognize the seasons. I had seen it stuck with cornflowers in the summer, with golden-rod and asters in the autumn, with feathers and strange wisps of straw in winter; and now it bore a spray of apple-blossom, with some dandelions, those northern sun-worshippers, whose closing petals now declared that even in death they took note of the passing of their lord.

In his hand Grûl carried the same quaint wand of white wood, with its grotesque carven head dyed scarlet, which had caught my eye with an uneasy fascination the first time I met its possessor. That little stick, which Grûl wielded with

authority as if it were a sceptre, still caused me some superstitious qualms. I remembered how at my first sight of it I had looked to see a living spark leap from that scarlet head.

"It has been a long time coming," said I, as Grûl paused before me, searching my face curiously with his gleaming eyes. "And meanwhile I have come. I think, monsieur, I should esteem a welcome somewhat more cordial than your words of dolorous omen."

Whether he were displeased or not at my forwardness in addressing him I cannot tell. He was without doubt accustomed to choose his own time for speech. His eyes danced with a shifting, sharp light, and after thrusting his little wand at me till, in spite of myself, I felt the easy smile upon my lips grow something mechanical, he said with withering slowness:

"To the boy and the fool how small a handful of years may seem a lifetime! You think it is long coming? It is even now come. The shadow of the smoke of her burning even now lies upon Acadie. The ships of her exile are near."

He stopped; and I had no word of mocking wherewith to answer him. Then his eyes and his voice softened a little, and he continued:

"And *you* have come back—poor boy, poor fool!—with joy in your heart; and your joy even now is crumbling to ashes in your mouth."

He turned away, leaving me still speechless; but in an instant he was back and his wand thrust at me with a suddenness that made me recoil in childish apprehension. In a voice indescribably dry and biting he cried swiftly:

"But look you, boy. Whether she be yours or another's, there is an evil hand uplifted against her this night. See you to it!"

"What do you mean?" I cried, my heart sinking with a sudden fear. "Nay, you *shall* tell me!" I went on fiercely, making as if to restrain him by force as he turned away. But he bent upon me one look of such scorn that I felt at once convicted of folly; and striding off, with something of a dignity in his carriage which all his grotesquerie of garb could not conceal, he left me to chew upon his words. As for the warning, that was surely plain enough. I was to go to Yvonne, and be by her in case of any need. The business thus laid upon me was altogether to my liking. But that pitying word — of joy that should turn to ashes in my mouth! It filled me with black foreboding. As I stepped down briskly toward Grand Pré my joy was already dead, withered at a madman's whisper. And that great-growing cloud from over Blomidon had swallowed up all the village in a chill shadow.

Chapter III

Charms and Counter-charms

NEVER may I forget that walking down from the Gaspereau Ridge to Grand Pré village. The very air seemed charged with mystery. Every sight and every sound bore the significance of an omen, to which I lacked interpreter. The roofs of the village itself, and the marshes, the sea, and the far-off bulk of Blomidon, appeared like the tissue of a dream, ready to vanish upon a turn of thought, and leave behind I knew not what of terrible reality.

I am not by nature superstitious at all beyond the point of convenience. Such superstitions as please me I have ever been wont to cherish for the interest to be had out of them. I have often been strengthened in a doubtful intention by omens that looked my way, and auspicious signs have many a time cheered me astonishingly when affairs have seemed to be going ill. But the most menacing of omens have ever had small weight when opposing themselves to my set purpose. When a super-

stition is on my side I show it much civility: when it is against me it seems of small account.

But that night I was more superstitious than usual. Of the new moon, a pallid bow just sinking, I caught first sight over my left shoulder, and I felt vaguely troubled thereat. One crow, croaking from a willow stump upon my right hand, got up heavily and flew across my path. I disliked the omen, and felt straightway well assured of some approaching rebuff. When, a few moments later, *two* crows upon my left hand flew over to my right I was not greatly comforted, for they were far ahead and I was forced to conclude that the felicity which they prophesied was remote.

Thus it came that presently I was in a waking and walking dream, not knowing well the substance from the shadow. Yet my senses did so continue to serve me that I went not down into the village, where I knew I should find many a hand-clasp, but followed discreetly along the back of the orchards, that I might reach the De Lamourie place as swiftly as possible.

By this hour a sweet-smelling mist, such as, I think, falls nowhere else as it does in the Acadian fields, lay heavy on the grasses. I behought me that it was the dew of the new moon, and therefore endowed with many virtues; and I persuaded myself to believe that my feet, which were by now

well drenched with it, must needs be set upon a fortunate errand.

As I came to this comforting conclusion I reached a little thicket at an orchard corner, where grew a deep tangle of early flowering herbs. There, gathering the wet and perfumed blooms, stooped an old woman with a red shawl wrapped over her head and shoulders. She straightened herself briskly as I came beside her, and I saw the haggard, high-boned, hawk-nosed face of old Mother Pêche, whose tales of wizardry I had often listened to in the years long gone by. She turned upon me her strange eyes, black points of piercing intelligence encircled by a startling glitter of wide white, and at once she stretched out to me a crooked hand of greeting.

"It is good for these old eyes, Master Paul, to see thee back in the village!" she exclaimed.

Now, any one will tell you that it is not well to be crossed in one's path by an old woman, when on an errand of moment. I hurried past, therefore; and it shames me to say it. But then, remembering that one had better defy any omen than leave a kindness undone, I stopped, turned back, and hastily grasped the old dame's wizened hand, slipping into it a silver piece as I did so.

It was a broad piece, and full as much as I could wisely spare; but an old woman or a small boy is ever welcome to share my last penny. Her

strange eyes gleamed for a moment, but as she looked up to bless me her face changed. After gazing earnestly into my eyes she muttered something which I could not catch, and to my huge amazement flung the silver behind her with a violence which left no doubt of her intentions. She flung it toward a little swampy pool; but as luck would have it the coin struck a willow sapling by the pool's edge, bounded back, and fell with a clink upon a flat stone, where I marked it as it lay whitely glittering.

I was too amazed to protest for a moment, but the old woman hastened to appease me.

"There was sorrow on it, dearie, — thy sorrow," she exclaimed coaxingly; "and I wouldn't have it. The devil take all thy bad luck, and Mary give thee new fortune!"

To me it seemed that throwing away the silver piece was taking superstition quite too seriously. I laughed and said:

"But, mother, if there be bad luck ahead of me, so much the more do I want your blessing, and truly I cannot spare you another silver crown. Faith, this one's not gone yet, after all!" And picking it up I handed it back to her. "Let the devil fly away with my ill luck, if he may, but don't let him fly away with your little savings," I added.

The old dame shook her head doubtfully, and

then with a sigh of resignation, as who should say, "The gifts of destiny are not to be thrust aside," slipped the silver into some deep-hidden pocket. But her loving concern for my prosperity was not to be balked. After a little fumbling she brought out a small pebble, which she gave me with an air that showed it to be, in her eyes, some very great thing.

I took it with an answering concern, looked at it very closely, and turned it over in my hand, waiting for some clue to its significance before I should begin to thank her for the gift, if gift it were. The stone was assuredly beautiful, about the size of a hazel-nut, and of a clouded, watery green in color, but the curious quality of it was that as you held it up a moving loop of light seemed to gather at its heart, taking somewhat the semblance of a palely luminous eye. My interest deepened at once, and I bethought me of a stone of rarity and price which was sometimes to be found under Blomidon. It went by the name of "Le Veilleur," or "The Watcher," among our Acadian peasants; but the Indians called it "The Eye of Manitou," and many mystic virtues were ascribed to it.

"Why, mother," I said presently, "this is a thing of great price! I cannot take it. 'Tis a 'Watcher,' is it not?" And I gazed intently into its elusive loop of light.

"I have another," she answered eagerly, thrusting her hands under her red cloak as if to prevent me giving back the stone. "That is for thee, and thou'l need it, *cheri* Master Paul."

"Well," said I, staring at the beautiful jewel with a growing affection, "I will take it with much thanks, mother, but I must pay you what it is worth; and that I will find out in Quebec, from one who knows the worth of jewels."

"Thou shalt *not* pay me, Master Paul," said the old dame, with a distinct note of resentment in her voice. "It is my gift to thee, because I have loved thee since thou wert a little lad; and because thou'l need the stone. Promise me thou'l wear it always about thee;" and plucking it from my hand with a swift insinuation of her long fingers she slipped it into a tiny pouch of dressed deerskin and proceeded to affix a leathern thong whereby I might, as I inferred, hang the talisman about my neck.

"While this you wear," she went on in a low, singing voice, "what most you fear will never come to pass."

"But I am not greatly given to fear, mother," said I, with a little vainglorious laugh.

"Then thou hast not known love," she retorted sharply.

At these words the fear of which she had spoken came about me — vague, formless, terrible, and I trembled.

"Give it to me!" I cried in haste. "Give it to me! I will repay you, mother, with" — and here I laughed again — "with love, which you say I have never known."

"*That* kind of love, Master Paul, thou hast known since thou wert a very little lad. Thou'st given it freely, out of a kind heart. But, dearie, thou hast but played at the great love — or more would'st thou know of fear." And the old woman looked at me with shrewd question in her startling eyes.

But I did know fear — and I knew that I knew love. My face turned anxiously toward De Lmourie's, and I grudged every instant of further delay.

"Good-by, mother, and the saints keep you!" I cried hastily, swinging off through the wet grass. But the old dame called after me gently:

"Stop a minute, Master Paul. She will be at her supper by now; an' in a little she'll be walking in the garden path."

I stopped, filled with wonder, and my veins leaping in wild confusion at the sound of that little word "she." It was as if the old woman had shouted "Yvonne" at the top of her voice.

"What is it?" I stammered.

"I want to look at thy hand, dearie," she said, grasping it and turning it so as to catch the last of the fading light.

"Your heart's desire is nigh your death of hope," said she presently, speaking like an oracle. Then she dropped my hand with a little dry chuckle, and turned away to her gathering of herbs as if I were of no further account.

"What do you mean?" I asked eagerly.

But she would not answer me. I scorned to appear too deeply concerned in such old woman's foolery; so I asked no more, but went my way, carrying the word in my heart with a strange comfort — which, had I but known it, was right soon to turn into despair.

Chapter IV

"Habet!"

I CAME upon the De Lamourie farmhouse by the rear of the orchard; and down through the low, blossoming arches, now humming with night moths and honey beetles, I hastened toward the front door. Before I reached it there arose an angry barking from the yard, and a huge black dog, objecting to the manner of my approach, came charging upon me with appearance of malign intent.

I was vexed at the notion of a possible encounter, for I would not use my sword or my pistols on the guardian of my friend's domain; yet I had small desire that the brute should tear my clothes. I cursed my folly in not carrying a stick wherewith to beat off such commonplace assailants. But there was nothing for it save indifference, so I paid no attention to the dog until he was almost upon me. Then I turned my head and said sharply, "Down, sir, down!"

To all domestic animals the voice of authority

is the voice of right. I had forgotten that for the moment. The dog stopped, and stood growling doubtfully. He could not muster up resolution to attack one who spoke with such an assurance of privilege. Yet what could justify my highly irregular approach? He would await developments. In a casual, friendly manner, as I walked on, I stretched out the back of my hand to him, as if to signify that he might lick it if he would; but this he was by no means ready for, so he kept his distance obstinately.

In another moment there appeared at the head of the path a white, slight figure, with something black about the head and shoulders. It was Yvonne, come out to see the cause of the loud disturbance.

"It is I, mademoiselle," I exclaimed in an eager voice, hastening to meet her, — "Paul Grande, back from the West."

A slight gasping cry escaped her, and she paused irresolutely. It was but for the least part of an instant; yet my memory took note of it afterward, though it passed me unobserved at the time. Then she came to meet me with outstretched hands of welcome. Both little hands I crushed together passionately in my grasp, and would have dropped on my knees to kiss them but for two hindrances: Firstly, her father appeared at the moment close behind her — and

things which are but natural in privacy are like to seem theatrical when critically observed. Further, finding perhaps a too frank eloquence in my demeanor, Yvonne had swiftly but firmly extricated her hands from their captivity. She had said nothing but "I am glad to see you again, after so long a time, monsieur;" and this so quietly that I knew not whether it was indifference spoke, or emotion.

But the welcome of Giles de Lamourie was right ardent for one of his courteous reserve. There was an affection in his voice that warmed my spirit strangely, the more that I had never suspected it; and he kissed me on both cheeks as if I had been his own son — "as," said the up-leaping heart within me, "I do most resolutely set myself to be!"

"And to what good chance do we owe it, Paul, that we see you here at Grand Pré, at a time when the swords of New France are everywhere busy?" he asked.

"To a brief season of idleness in two years of ceaseless action," I replied, "and to a desire that would not be denied." I sought furtively to catch Yvonne's eyes; but she was picking an apple-flower to pieces. This little dainty depredation of her fingers pierced me with remembrance.

"You have earned your idleness, Paul," said De Lamourie, "if the stories we hear of your exploits

be the half of them true. But we had thought down here that Quebec" — "or Trois Pistoles," murmured Yvonne over the remnants of the apple-flower — "would have offered metal more attractive for the enrichment of your holiday."

I flushed hotly. But in the deepening dusk my confusion passed unseen. What gossip had come this way? What magnifying and distortion of a very little affair, so soon gone by and so lightly forgotten?

"The swords of New France are just now sheathed for a little," said I, with some reserve in my voice. "They are biding the call to new and hotter work, or I should not be free for even this breathing-spell. As for Quebec," — for I would not seem to have heard mademoiselle's interruption, — "for years there has been but one place where I desired to be, and that is here; so I have come, but it is not for long. Great schemes are afoot."

"For long or for little, my boy," said he, dropping his tone of banter, "your home here must be under our roof."

Having intended staying, as of old, with Father Fafard, I knew not for a moment what to say. I would — and yet a voice within said I would not. I noted that Yvonne spoke no word in support of her father's invitation. While I hesitated we had entered the house, and I found myself bend-

ing over the wizened little hand of Madame de Lamourie. My decision was postponed. Had I guessed how my silence would by and by be misinterpreted I would assuredly have decided on the spot, whichever way.

"It is not only for the breath of gayety from Chateau St. Louis which you bring with you, my dear Paul, that you are welcome," said Madame, with that fine air of affectionate coquetry, reminiscent of Versailles, which so delightfully became her.

I kissed her hand again. We had always been the best of friends.

"But let me present to you," she went on, "our good friend, who must also be yours: Mr. George Anderson;" and observing for the first time a tall, broad-shouldered, ruddy man, who stood a little to one side of the fireplace, I bowed to him very courteously. Our eyes met. I felt for him a prompt friendliness, and as if moved by one impulse we clasped hands.

"With all my heart," said I, being then in cordial mood, and eager to love one loved of these my friends.

"And mine," he said, in a quiet, grave voice, "if it please you, monsieur."

"Yet," I laughed, "if you are English, Monsieur Anderson, we must officially be enemies. I trust our difference may be in all love."

"Yes," said Madame, with a dry little biting

accent which she much affected, "yes, indeed, in all love, my dear Paul. Monsieur Anderson *is* English—and he is the betrothed husband of our Yvonne," she added, watching me keenly.

It seemed to me as if there had been a sudden roaring noise and then these last dreadful words coming coldly upon a great silence. At that moment everything stamped itself ineffaceably on my brain. I see myself grasp the back of a chair, that I may stand with the more irreproachable steadiness. I see Madame's curious scrutiny. I see Yvonne's eyes, which had swiftly sought my face as the words were spoken, change and warm to mine for the least fraction of a second. I see all this now, and her slim form unspeakably graceful against the dark wainscoting of the chimney side. Then it all seemed to swim, and I knew that it was with great effort of will I steadied myself; and at last I perceived that Yvonne was holding both Anderson and her father in rapt attention by a sort of radiance of light speech and dainty gesture. I dimly came to understand that Yvonne had seen in my face something which she had not looked to see there, and, moved to compassion, had come to my aid and covered up my hurt. In a moment more I was master of myself, but I knew that Madame's eyes had never left me. She liked me more than a little; but a certain mirthful malice, which she had retained from the old

gay days in France, made her cruel whensoever one afforded her the spectacle of a tragedy.

All this takes long in the telling; but it was perhaps not above a minute ere I was able to perceive that Mademoiselle's diversion had been upon the theme of one's duty to one's enemies. What she had said I knew not, nor know I to this day; but I will wager it was both witty and wise. I only know that at this point a direct appeal was made to me.

"You, monsieur," said Anderson, in his measured tones, "will surely grant that it is always virtuous, and often possible, to love one's enemies."

"But never prudent!" interjected De Lamourie, whose bitter experiences in Paris colored his conclusions.

"Your testimony, monsieur, as that of one who has sent so many of them to Paradise, is much to be desired upon this subject," exclaimed Yvonne, in a tone of challenge, at the same time flashing over me a look which worked upon me like a wizard's spell, making me straightway strong and ready.

"Well may we love them!" I cried, with an air of sober mockery. "Our enemies are our opportunities; and without our opportunities, where are we?"

"All our life is our opportunity, and if we be brave and faithful to church and king we are

made great by it," exclaimed a harsh, intense voice behind us.

I noted a look of something like consternation on De Lamourie's face, and a mocking defiance in the eyes of Yvonne. We turned about hastily to greet the new-comer. I knew at once, by hearsay, that dark-robed figure — the high, narrow, tonsured head — the long nose with its aggressively bulbous tip — the thin lips with their crafty smile — the dogged and indomitable jaw. It was La Garne, the Black Abbé, master of the Micmac tribes, and terror of the English in Acadie. He was a devoted servant to the flag I served, the lilyed banner of France; but I dreaded and detested him, for I held that he brought dishonour on the French cause, as well as on his priestly office, by his devious methods, his treacheries, and his cruelties. War, I cannot but think, becomes a gross and hideous thing whensoever it is suffered to slip out of the control of gentlemen, who alone know how to maintain its courtesies.

Chapter V

The Black Abbé Desers

"YOU are welcome, father," began Monsieur de Lamourie, advancing to meet the visitor, "to my humble" — But the harsh voice cut him short.

"Lie not to me, Giles de Lamourie," said the grim priest, extending a long left hand as if in anathema. "Well do I know my face is not welcome in this house!"

De Lamourie drew himself up haughtily, and Madame interrupted.

"Good father," said she most sweetly, but with an edge to her voice, "do you not take something the advantage of your gown? Might I not be so bold as to entreat a more courteous deliverance of your commands?"

"What have I to do with forms and courtesies, woman?" he answered — and ignored Yvonne's laughing acquiescence of "What, indeed, monsieur?" "I come to admonish you back to your duty; and to warn you, if you heed not. I learn

that you are about to go to Halifax, Giles de Lamourie, and there forswear France, bowing your neck to the English robber. Is this true?"

"I am about to swear allegiance to England, Father La Garne," said De Lamourie coldly.

The priest's pale eyes narrowed.

"There is yet time to change your mind," said he, in a voice grown suddenly smooth. "Give me your word that you will remain faithful to France and the bolt which even now hangs over your recreant head shall never fall!"

I looked about me in deep astonishment. Yvonne's face was splendid in its impatient scorn. Madame looked solicitous, but composed. Anderson smiled coolly. But De Lamourie was hot with indignation.

"It was not to be dictated to by every tonsured meddler that I came to Acadie," he cried, rashly laying himself open.

"I have heard as much," said the priest dryly. "But enough of this talk," he went on, his voice again vibrating. "You, George Anderson, seducer of these people from their king, look to yourself! Your threshold is red. As for this house"—and he looked around with slow and solemn menace—"as for this house, it shall not see to-morrow's sun!"

Hitherto I had been silent, as became a mere new-come guest; but this was too much for me.

"Ay, but it shall!" said I bluntly, stepping forward.

La Garne looked at me with unaffected surprise and contempt.

"And pray, sir, who may you be to speak so confidently?" he asked.

"I am an officer of the king, Sir Abbé," I answered, "and a messenger of the governor of New France, and a man of my word. Your quarrel here I do not very well understand, but I beg *you* to understand that this house is the house of my friends. I know you, Sir Abbé,—I have heard rumour of your work at Beaubassin, Baie Verte, and Gros Ile. I tell you, I will not suffer you to lift your hand against this house!"

"Truly, monsieur, you speak large," sneered the priest. "But you may, perchance, have authority. I seem to have seen your face before. Your name?"

"Paul Grande," said I, bowing.

La Garne's face changed. He looked at me curiously, and then, with a sort of bitter tolerance, shrugged his shoulders.

"You have been to Monsieur le Commandant Vergor, at Beauséjour?" he asked.

I bowed.

"And to Vaurin, at Piziquid?" he went on thoughtfully.

I fancied that a shade of suspicion passed over

the faces of my hosts; and Yvonne's face paled slightly; but I replied:

"I have just come from Piziquid."

"Your authority is sufficient, then, monsieur," said he. "The messenger of the governor to Vaurin doubtless knows his business, and it is unnecessary for me to interfere."

I bowed my thanks, holding courtesy to be in place, since I had gained my point.

"And I pardon your abruptness, Monsieur Grande," continued the Black Abbé. "We are both working for the king. We have no right to quarrel when we have such great work to do. I am sure I may accept your apology for your abruptness?" And he looked at me with an air of suggestion.

I was puzzled at his changed demeanour, but I would not show myself at a loss. Still less would I apologize, or suffer any pretence of friendliness between himself and me.

"I am sure you may," said I pleasantly. And I think the reply a prudent one.

Yvonne smiled—I just caught the smile; but the abbé turned on his heel.

"I withdraw my admonition," he said to De Lamourie smoothly, "and leave your case in the hands of this gentleman, your good friend. I wish you a swift conversion—or a long repentance." And with a glance at me which I liked

not, but could by no means interpret, he was gone.

The room grew straightway the brighter for his going.

Chapter VI

A New England Englishman

I HAVE said that the room grew brighter for the going of the Black Abbé. To me, at least, it seemed so. Yet, after his departure, there fell a palpable air of constraint. Monsieur de Lamourie regarded me with something almost like suspicion. Madame eyed me with a curious scrutiny, tolerant, yet as it were watchful. As for Yvonne, her face was coldly averted. All this troubled me. Only the New Englander came to my rescue.

With a smile of frank satisfaction he remarked : " You dealt very effectively and expeditiously with that black-frocked firebrand, monsieur. You must have great influence at headquarters to be able to treat La Garne with so little ceremony."

Now, puzzled though I was, I was marvellously elated by my easy victory over the notorious Black Abbé. There was doubtless a vainglorious ring in the would-be modest voice with which I answered.

"Yes," said I, "I did not expect quite so swift a triumph. I thought I might even be driven to threats ill fitting the dignity of his office. But doubtless he saw that I was rather in earnest."

"He certainly seemed to regard you as one having authority," said De Lamourie gravely.

"Or even," murmured Madame, with that dryness in her voice, "as in some way his confederate."

"Or Vaurin's," came a cold suggestion from Mademoiselle. Her eyes were gazing steadily into the fire but I caught the scornful curl of her lip.

At this I felt myself flush hotly, I knew not just why. It seemed as if I lay under some obscure but disgraceful imputation. With sudden warmth I cried:

"I have no authority, save as an officer of the king, with a clean record and a sword not unproven. I have no confederate, nor am I like to be engaged in such work as shall make one needful. And as for this Vaurin," I demanded, turning to Yvonne, "who is he? He seems a personage indeed; yet never had I heard of him till the commandant of Beauséjour gave me a letter for his hand."

"I cannot doubt you, monsieur," interposed Anderson heartily. "This Vaurin is a very sorry scoundrel, a spy and an assassin, who does the dirty work of those who employ him. I think it

was ill done of Vergor to give to any gentleman a commission to that foul cur."

I sprang to my feet and walked thrice up and down the room, while all sat silent. I think my anger was plain enough to every one, for the old friendliness — as I afterwards remembered — came back to the faces of Monsieur and Madame de Lamourie, and Yvonne's eyes shone upon me for an instant with a wistfulness which I could not understand. Yet this, as I said, is but what came back to me afterwards. I felt Yvonne's eyes but as in a dream at that moment.

"Vergor shall answer to me," I cried bitterly. "It is ill work serving under the public thieves whom the intendant puts in power to-day. One never knows what baseness may not be demanded of him. Vergor shall clear himself, or meet me!"

"What hope is there for your cause," asked Anderson, "when they who guide New France are so corrupt?"

"They are *not* all corrupt!" I declared with vehemence. "The governor is honest. The general is honour itself. But, alas, the most grievous enemies of New France are those within her gate! Bigot is the prince of robbers. His hands and those of his gang are at her throat. It is he we fear, and not you English, brave and innumerable though you are."

And with this my indignation at Vergor, who, it

was plain, had put upon me an errand unbecoming to a gentleman and an officer of the king, spread out to include the whole corrupt crew of which the intendant Bigot was the too efficient captain. Seating myself again by the hearth, I gave bitter account of the wrong and infamy at Quebec, and showed how, to the anguish of her faithful sons, New France was being stripped and laid bare to the enemy. My heart being as dead with my own sudden sorrow, the story which I told of my country's plight was steeped in dark forebodings.

When I had finished, the conversation became general, and I presently withdrew into my heaviness. I remember that Madame rallied me, at last, on my silence; but Yvonne came quickly and sweetly to my help, recalling my long day's journey and insisting upon my drinking a cup of spiced brandy—"very sound and good," she declared, "and but late from Louisburg, no thanks to King George!"

As I sat sipping of the fragrant brew—though it had been wormwood it had seemed to me delicate from her hand—I tried to gather together the shattered fragments of my dream.

There she sat—of all women the one woman, as I had in the long, solitary night-watches come to know, whom my soul needed and my body needed. My inmost thought, speaking with itself in nakedest sincerity, declared that it was she

only whom God had made for me — or for whom God had made me. The whole truth, as I felt it, required both statements to perfect its expression. There she sat, so near that her voice was making a wonder of music in my ears, so near that her eyes from time to time flashed a palpable radiance upon my face; yet further away than when I lightened with dreams of her the long marches beside the Miami or lay awake to think of her, in the remote huts of the Natchez. So far away had a word, a brief word, put her; yet here she sat where I could grasp her just by stretching out my hand.

As I thought of it her eyes met mine. I swear that I made no motion. My grasp never relaxed from the arm of the black old chair where it had fixed itself. Yet the thought must have cried out to her, for a look of alarm, yet not wholly of denial, flickered for one heart-beat in her gaze. She rose, with a little aimless movement, looked at me, swayed her body toward me almost imperceptibly, then sat down again in her old place with her face averted. At once she began talking with a whimsical gayety that engrossed all ears and left me again in my gloom.

I scrutinized this man, the New Englander, who sat drinking her with his eyes. For the joy that was in his face as he watched her I cursed him — yet ere the curse had gone forth I blessed him

bitterly. How could I curse him when I saw that his soul was on its knees to her, as mine was. I felt myself moved toward him in a strange affection. Yet—and yet!

He was a tall man, well over six feet in height, of a goodly breadth of shoulder,—taller than myself by three inches at least, and heavier in build. He had beauty, too, which I could not boast of; though before love taught me humility I had been vain enough to deem my face not all ill-favored. His abundant light hair, slightly waving; his ruddy, somewhat square face, with its good chin and kind mouth; his frank and cheerful blue eyes, fearless but not aggressive; his air of directness and good intention—all compelled my tribute of admiration, and made me think little of my own sombre and sallow countenance, with its straight black hair, straight black brows, straight black moustache; its mouth large and hard set; its eyes wherein mirth and moroseness were at frequent strife for mastery. Being, as I have reluctantly confessed, a vain man without good cause for vanity, I knew the face well—and it was with small satisfaction I remembered it now, while looking upon the manly fairness of George Anderson.

Yet, such is the inconsistency of men, I was conscious of a faint, inexplicable pity for him. I felt myself stronger than he, and wiser in the knowledge of life. But he had the promise of that

which to me was more than life. He had, as I kept telling myself, Yvonne's love; yet — had he? So obstinate is hope, I would not yield all credence to this telling. At least I had one advantage, if no other. I was wiser than he in this, that *I* knew my love for Yvonne, and he did not know it. Yet this was but a poor vantage, and even upon the moment I had resolved to throw it away. I resolved that he should be as wise as I on this point, if telling could make him so.

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Chapter VII

Guard!

I HAD just arrived at this significant determination when I was roused from my reverie by Anderson making his farewells. He was holding out his hand to me.

"Your face is stern, monsieur," he said. "Were you fighting your old battles o'er again?"

"No—new ones!" I laughed, springing up and seizing his hand.

"May you win them, as of old!" he exclaimed, with great heartiness.

"You are generous, monsieur," I said gently, looking him in the eyes.

But this remark he took as quite the ordinary reply, and with a bright glance for us all he moved toward the door. Yvonne followed him, as it seemed was expected of her.

"Must you go so early?" she asked, with a kindness in her voice which pierced me.

"Yes," he said, looking down at her upturned face. "The tide is just right now, and this fair

wind must not be lost. It will be a fine run under this moon; and Pierre has the new boat over to-night."

"It *is* a good night," she assented, peering through the open door with a gesture of gay inquiry; "and how sweet the apple-blossoms smell! Have you as good air as this, Monsieur Grande, on those western rivers of yours, or at Trois Pistoles?"

As she did not turn her head or seem to require an answer, I made none. And, indeed, I was spared the necessity, for Anderson intervened with matter of his own.

"Come down to the gate with me, won't you?" I heard him beg in a low voice.

But for some reason Mademoiselle was not disposed to be kind that night. She drew back, and looked down pointedly at her dainty embroidered moccasins.

"Oh," she cried lightly and aloud, with a tantalizing ring in her voice, "just think how wet the path is!"

Anderson turned away with a disappointed air, whereupon she reached out her hand imperiously for him to kiss. Then she waved him a gay *bon voyage*, and came back into the room with a quick lightness of step which seemed like laughter in itself. Her eyes were a dancing marvel, with some strange excitement.

"Monsieur," she began, coming straight toward me. But I just then awoke to my purpose.

"A thousand pardons, mademoiselle and madame!" I cried, springing to my feet and hastening to the door. "I will be back in two moments; but I have a word for Monsieur Anderson before he goes."

That I should interrupt her in this way, and rush off when she was about to speak to me, fetched a sudden little cloud of astonishment over Yvonne's face. But I would not be delayed. I made haste down the path and caught Anderson before he reached the gate. He paused with an air of genial surprise.

"Your pardon, monsieur," said I; "but with your permission I will accompany you a few steps, as I have something to say to you."

"I am glad to have your company, monsieur," said he, with a manner that spoke sincerity.

"Are you?" said I abruptly. "Well, somehow I take your words as something more than the thin clink of compliment. I like you — I liked you the moment my eyes fell upon you."

His face flashed into a rare illumination, and without a word he held out his hand.

I could not but smile responsively, though I thrust my hand behind my back and shook my head.

"Wait!" said I. "I want to say to you that — I love — I love Mademoiselle de Lamourie!"

His face clouded a little, and he withdrew his hand, but not angrily.

"We are very much of one mind in that, I assure you," he said.

"The very ground she walks upon is sacred to me," I continued.

He smiled ever so little at the passion of my speech, but answered thoughtfully:

"It is but natural, I suppose. I do not think we will quarrel upon that score, monsieur."

"For two years," said I, in a low voice, speaking coldly and evenly, "I have been moved night and day by this love only. It has supported me in hunger and in weariness; it has led me in the wilderness; it has strengthened me in the fight; it has been more to me than all ambition. Even my love of my country has been second to it. I came here to-day for one reason only. And I find — you!"

"None can know so well as I what you have lost, monsieur," said he very gravely, "as none can know so well as I what I have gained."

His kindness, no less than his confidence, hurt me.

"Are you so sure?" I asked.

"The discussion is unusual, monsieur," said he, with a sudden resentment. "I will only remind you that Mademoiselle de Lamourie has accepted my suit."

No man's sternness has ever troubled me, and I smiled slightly in acknowledgment of his very reasonable remark.

"The situation is unusual, so you must pardon me," said I, "if I arrogate to myself a somewhat unusual freedom. I tell you now frankly that by all open and honorable means I will strive to win the love of Mademoiselle de Lamourie. I have hope that she has not yet clearly found the wisdom of her heart. I believe that I, not you, am the man whom she will love. Laugh at my vanity as much as you will. I am not yet ready to say my hope is dead, my life turned to nothingness."

"You are weak," said he, with some severity, "to hold your life thus, as it were, in jeopardy of a woman's whim."

I could hardly restrain my voice from betraying a certain triumph which I felt at this sign of imperfection in his love.

"If you hold it a weakness," said I, "there is a point at last in which we differ. If it *be* a weakness, then it is one which, up to two years ago, I had scarce dared hope to attain. Few, indeed, are the women, and as few men, strong enough for the full knowledge of love."

"Yet the greatest love is not the whole of life," he averred disputatiously.

"You speak but coldly," said I, "for the lover of Mademoiselle de Lamourie."

He started. I had stung him. "I am of the Society of Friends—a Quaker!" said he harshly. "I do not fight. I lift not my hand against my fellow-man. Yet did I believe that you would succeed in winning her love, I think I would kill you where you stand!"

I liked the sharp lines of his face as he said it, fronting me with eyes grown suddenly cruel. I felt that he meant it, for the moment at least.

"Say, rather," said I, smiling, "that you would honestly try your best to kill me. It would be an interesting experiment. Well, now we understand each other. *I* will honestly try my best to do you what will be, in my eyes, the sorest injury in the world. But I will try by fair means only, and if I fail I will bear you no grudge. In all else, however, believe that I do greatly desire your welfare, and will seize with eagerness any occasion of doing you a service. You are perhaps less unworthy of Mademoiselle de Lamourie than I am, save that you cannot love her so well. And *now*," I added with a smile, "will you take my hand?"

As I held it out to him he at first drew back and seemed disposed to repulse me. Then his face cleared.

"You are honest!" he exclaimed, and wrung my hand with great cordiality. "I rather like you—and I am very sorry for you. I have her promise."

"Well," said I, "if also you have her love you are the most fortunate man on God's earth!"

"I have it!" said he blithely, and strode off down the path between the apple-trees, his fine shoulders held squarely, and a confidence in all his bearing. But a wave of pity for him, and strange tenderness, went over me in that moment, for in that moment I felt an assurance that I should win.

It was an assurance doomed to swift ruin. It was an assurance destined soon to be hidden under such a vast wreckage of my hopes that even memory marvelled when she dragged it forth to light.

Chapter VIII

The Moon in the Apple-bough

DURING all our conversation we had stood in plain view of the windows, so that our friendly parting must have been visible to all the house. On my return within doors I found Yvonne walking up and down in a graceful impatience, her black lace shawl thrown lightly about her head.

"If you want to," said she, "you may come out on the porch with me for a little while, monsieur. I want you to talk to me."

"Yvonne," exclaimed her mother, in a rebuking voice, "will not this room do as well?"

"No, indeed, little mamma," said she wilfully. "*Nothing* will do as well as the porch, where the moonlight is, and the smell of the apple-blossoms. You know, dear, Grand Pré is not Paris!"

"Nor yet is it Quebec," said I pointedly.

Monsieur de Lamourie smiled. Whatever Yvonne would was in his eyes good. But her mother yielded only with a little gesture of protest.

"Yvonne is always a law unto herself," she murmured.

"And to others, I judge," said I, following the light figure out upon the porch, and closing the door behind me.

I praised the saints for the freedom of Grand Pré. At Quebec Mademoiselle would have been the most formal of the formalists, because in Quebec it was easy to be misjudged.

In the corner of the porch, where a huge apple-bough thrust its blossoms in beneath the roof, was slung a stout hammock such as sailors use on ship-board. Mademoiselle de Lamourie had seen these during a voyage down the Gulf from Quebec, and had so fancied them that her father had been impelled to have one netted for her by the shad-fishers. It was her favoured lounging-place, and thither she betook herself now without apology. In silence I held the tricksy netting for her. In silence I placed the cushion beneath her head. Then she said:

"You may sit there," and she pointed, with a little imperious motion, to a stout bench standing against the wall.

I accepted the seat, but not its location. I brought it and placed it as close as I dared to the hammock. In doing so I clumsily set the hammock swinging.

"Please stop it," said Mademoiselle; and as I

seated myself I laid my hand on the side of the hammock to arrest its motion. My fingers found themselves in contact with other fingers, very slim and warm and soft. My breath came in a quick gasp, and I drew away my hand in a strange and overwhelming perturbation. The hammock was left to stop of itself — and, indeed, its swinging was but slight. As for me, I was possessed by an infinite amazement to find myself thus put to confusion by a touch. I had no word to say, but sat gazing dumbly at the white figure in the moonlight.

Her face was very pallid in that colorless light, and her eyes greater and darker than ever, deeps of mystery, — and now, I thought, of grave mockery as well. She watched me for a little in silence, and then said :

“I let you come out here to talk to me, monsieur ! ”

I straightened myself upon the bench, and tried my voice. My misgivings were justified. It trembled, beyond a doubt. The witch had me at a grave disadvantage. But I spoke on quietly.

“From my two years in the woods of the West, mademoiselle,” said I, “I brought home to Grand Pré certain wonderful dreams. Of these I find some more than realized; but one, which gave all meaning to the rest, has been put to death this night.”

"Even in Grand Pré dreams are no new thing," she said in haste. "I want to hear of deeds, of brave and great action. Tell me what you have done—for I know that will be brave." And she smiled at me such kind encouragement that my heart began thumping with vehemence. However, I made shift to tell her a little of my wanderings—of a bush fight here, a night march there, of the foiling of a foe, of the timely succour of a friend—till I saw that I was pleasing her. Her face leaned a little toward me. Her eyes spoke, dilating and contracting. Her lips were slightly parted as she listened. And into every adventure, every situation, every movement, I contrived to weave a suggestion of her influence, of the thought of her guiding and upholding me. These things, touched lightly and at once let pass, she did not rebuke. She feigned not to understand them.

At last I paused and looked at her, waiting for a word of praise or blame.

"And your poetry, monsieur?" she said gently. "Surely that was not all the time forgotten. This Acadian land, with its wonder and its beauty, has found no interpreter but you, and your brave work in the field would be a misfortune, not a benefit, if it cost us your song."

"The loss of my verses were no great loss," said I.

"Indeed, monsieur," she said earnestly, "I do

not think you can be as modest as you pretend. But I am sincere. Since we have known your song of them, I think that mamma and I have watched only through your eyes the great sweep of the Minas tides. And only the other day I heard papa, who cares for no poetry but his old '*Chansons de Gestes*,' quoting you to Father Fafard with evident enthusiasm." She paused — but I said nothing. I had talked long; and I wished her to continue. What she was saying, the manner of her saying it, were such as I could long listen to.

"As for me," she went on, "I never walk down the orchard in summer time without saying over to myself your song of the apple-leaves."

"You do, really, remember my verses?" said I, flushing with surprise and joy. I was not used to commendation for such things, my verses being wont to win no more approval than they merited, which I felt to be very little.

She laughed softly, and began to quote:

"O apple leaves, so cool and green
Against the summer sky,
You stir, although the wind is still
And not a bird goes by!
You start,
And softly move apart
In hushed expectancy.
Who is the gracious visitor
Whose form I cannot see?

The Moon in the Apple-bough 55

" 'O apple leaves, the mystic light
All down your dim arcade !
Why do your shadows tremble so,
Half glad and half afraid ?
The air
Is an unspoken prayer ;
Your eyes look all one way.
Who is the secret visitor
Your tremors would betray ?'"

It was a slight thing, which I had never thought particularly well of; but on her lips it achieved a music unimagin'd before.

"Your voice," said I, "makes it beautiful, as it makes all words beautiful. Yes, I have written some small bits of verse during my exile, but they have been different from those of mine which you honour with your praise. They have had another, a more wonderful, theme — a theme all too high for them, which nevertheless spurred them to their best. They have at least one merit — they speak the truth from my heart." As I spoke I felt myself leaning forward, though not of set purpose, and my voice sank almost to a whisper.

"One of them," I continued, begins in this way :

"A moonbeam or a breath, above thine eyes I bow,
Silent, unseen,
But not, ah ! not unknown"—

"Wait!" she interrupted, in a voice that sounded a little faint. "Wait! I want to hear them all,

monsieur; but not to-night. You shall say them to me to-morrow. I must not stay to listen to them to-night. I am a little — cold, I think! Help me out, please!" And she rashly gave me her hand.

Now, it was my honest intention at that instant to do just her bidding and no more; but when I touched her fingers reason and judgment flowed from me. I bowed my head over them to the edge of the hammock, and with both my hands crushed them to my lips. She sank back upon her cushion, with a little catching of her breath.

After a few moments I raised my head — but with no speech and with no set purpose — and looked at her face. It was very grave, and curiously troubled, but I detected no reproach in the great eyes that met mine. A fierce impulse seized me to gather her in my arms — but I durst not, and my eyes dropped as I thought of it. By chance they rested upon her feet — upon the tiny, quill-worked, beaded white moccasins, demurely crossed, the one over the other. Her skirt was so closely gathered about her ankles that just an inch or two of one arched instep was visible over the edge of the low-cut moccasin. Before I myself could realize what I was about to do, or half the boldness of the act, in a passion that was all worship I threw myself down beside her feet and kissed them.

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It was for an instant only that my daring so prevailed. Then she suddenly slipped away. In a breathless confusion I sprang to my feet, and found her standing erect at the other side of the hammock. Her eyes blazed upon me; but one small hand was at her throat, as if she found it hard to speak.

"How could you dare?" she panted. "What right did I give you? What right did I ever give you?"

I leaned against the pillar that supported one end of the hammock.

"Forgive me! I could not help it. I have loved you, worshipped you, so long!" I said in a very low voice.

"How dare you speak so?" she cried. "You forget that"—

"No, I remember!" I interrupted doggedly. "I forget nothing. You do not love him. You are mine."

"Oh!" she gasped, lifting both hands sharply to her face and dropping them at once. "I shall never trust you again."

And in a moment she had flashed past me, with a sob, and disappeared into the house.

Chapter IX

In Sleep a King, but Waking, no such Matter

DE LAMOURIE himself showed me to my room, a low chamber under the eaves, very plainly furnished. In the houses of the few Acadian gentry there was little of the luxury to be found in the seigneurial mansions of the St. Lawrence. In the De Lamourie house, for example, there were but two serving-maids, with one man to work the little farm.

If De Lamourie had noted any excitement on Yvonne's part, or any abstraction on mine, he said nothing of it. With simple kindness he set down the candle on my dressing-table and wished me good sleep. But at the door he turned.

"Are you well assured that the abbé will not attempt to carry out his threat?" he asked, with a tinge of anxiety in his voice.

"I am confident of it," I answered boldly. "That worthy ecclesiastic will not try issues with me, when I hold the king's commission."

Just why I should have been so overweeningly

secure is not clear to me now that I look back upon it. That I should have expected the terrible La Garne to bow so pliantly to my command appears to me now the most fatuous of vain follies. In truth I was thinking only of Yvonne. But De Lamourie seemed to take my assurance as final, and went away in blither mood.

My room was lighted by a narrow, high-peaked dormer window, through which I could look out across the moonlit orchards, the level dyke-lands, the wide and winding mouth of the Gaspereau, and the far-glimmering breast of Minas. Upon these my eyes rested long—but the eyes of my soul saw quite another loveliness than that of the moon-flooded landscape. They brooded upon Yvonne's face—the troubled, changing, pleading look in her eyes—her sharp and strange emotion at the last. Over and over it all I went, reliving each moment, each word, each look, each breath. Then, being deeply wearied by my long day's tramp, but with no hint of sleep coming to my eyes, I threw myself down upon the bed to deliciously think it all over yet again. I had grown sure that Yvonne loved me. Yet once more, in a still ecstasy of reverence and love, I fell at her feet and kissed them. Then I thought about the stone which Mother Pêche had given me, and its mystic virtues, which I would explain to Yvonne on the morrow in the apple-orchard. Then I found my-

self fancying that it was Yvonne who had given me the talisman, bidding me guard it well if I would ever hope to win her from my English rival. And then—the sunlight lay in a white streak across my bed-foot, the morning sky was blue over the dyke lands, and the robins were joyous in the apple-blooms under my window. What a marvellous air blew in upon my face, sweet with all freshness and cleanliness and wholesome strength! I sprang up, deriding myself. I had slept all night in my clothes.

At breakfast I found myself in plain favour; I had made good my boast and shielded the house from the Black Abbé. Yvonne met my eager looks with a baffling lightness. She was all gay courtesy to me, but there was that in her face which well dashed my hopes. Some faint encouragement, indeed, I drew from the thought that her pallor (which became her wonderfully) seemed to tell the tale of a sleepless night. Had she, then, lain awake, wearily reproaching herself, while I slept like a clod? If so, my punishment was not long delayed. Before the breakfast was over I was in a fever of despairing solicitude. At last I achieved a moment's speech with Yvonne while the others were out of earshot.

“This morning,” said I, “in the apple-orchard, by an old tree which I shall all my life remember,

I am to read you those verses, am I not? That was your decree."

She faced me with laughter in her eyes, but the eyes dropped in spite of her, and the colour came a little back to her cheeks.

"I decree otherwise this morning," she said, in a voice whose lightness was not perfect. "I am busy to-day, and shall not hear your poems at all, unless you read them to *us* this evening."

"I will read them to you alone," I muttered, "who alone are the source of them, or I will burn them at once!"

"Don't burn them," she said, flashing one radiant glance at me.

"Then when may I read them to you?" I begged.

"When you are older, and a little wiser, and a great deal better," she laughed, turning away with a finality in her air that convinced me my day was lost.

Putting my bravest face on my defeat, I said to Madame de Lamourie:

"If you will pardon me, Madame, I shall constrain myself and attend to certain duties in and about Grand Pré to-day. I must see the curé; and I have a commission to execute for the Sieur de Briart, which will take me perhaps as far as Pereau. In such case I shall not be back here before to-morrow noon."

"If our pleasure concerns you," said Madame very graciously, "make your absence as brief as you can."

"I was born with a nice regard for self," I replied. "You may be sure I shall return as quickly as possible."

"And what if the Black Abbé should come while you are away?" questioned Yvonne, in mock alarm.

"If that extraordinary priest makes my presence here a long necessity I shall come to regard him as my best friend," said I, laughing, as I bowed myself out to join De Lamourie in a stroll over the farm.

During this walk I learned much of the state of unrest and painful dread under which Acadie was laboring. De Lamourie told me how the English governor at Halifax was bringing a mighty pressure to bear upon all the Acadian householders, urging them to swear allegiance to King George. This, he said, very many were willing to do, as the English had governed them with justice and a most patient indulgence. For his own part, while he regretted to go counter to opinions which I held well-nigh sacred, he declared that, in his judgment, the cause of France was forever lost in Acadie, if not in all Canada. He felt it his duty to give in his allegiance to the English throne, under whose protection he had prospered these

many years. But strong as the English were, he said, the prospect was not reassuring; for many of those who had taken the oath had been brought to swift repentance by the Black Abbé's painted and yelling pack, the very Christian Micmacs of Shubenacadie; while others had been pillaged, maltreated, and even in some cases murdered, by the band of masquerading cut-throats who served the will of the infamous Vaurin.

At this I grew hot within, realizing as I had not done before the vile connection into which the Commandant Vergor had cast me. But I said nothing, being unwilling to interrupt De Lamourrie's impassioned story. He told of horrid treacheries on the part of the Micmacs, disavowed, indeed, by La Garne, but unquestionably winked at by him as a means of keeping the Acadians in hand. He told of whole villages wiped out by the Black Abbé's order, the houses burned, the trembling villagers removed to Ile St. Jean or across the isthmus, that they might be beyond the reach of English seductions. He told, too, of the hideous massacre at Dartmouth, the infant English settlement across the harbor from Halifax. This had come to my ears, but he gave me the reeking particulars.

"And this, too," I asked in horror, "is it La Garne's work?"

"He is accused of it by the English," said

he, "but for once he is accused unjustly, I do believe. It was Vaurin who planned it; Vaurin and his cut-throats, disguised as Indians and with a few of La Garne's flock to help, who carried it out. It was too purposeless for La Garne. He rules his savages with a rod of iron, and it is said that his displeasure lay heavy for a time upon the braves who had taken part in that outrage. They went without pay or booty for many months. But at length he forgave them — he had work for them to do."

When the tale was done, and it was a tale that filled me with shame for my country's cause, I said :

"It is well my word carried such weight with the good abbé last night. It is well indeed, and it is wonderful!"

"I cannot even yet quite understand it," said De Lamourie, "but the essential part is the highly satisfactory result. I am going to Halifax next Monday, Paul, with a half score followers who feel as I do ; and though I cannot expect you to sympathize with my course, I dare to hope you may be able to prolong your visit so as to keep my wife and daughter under your effective protection."

I think I must have let the eagerness with which I accepted this trust betray itself in voice or face, for Monsieur de Lamourie looked at me

curiously. But I really cared little what his suspicions might be. If I could win Yvonne I thought I might be sure of Yvonne's father.

Having well admired the orchard, and tried to distinguish the "pippin" trees from the "belle-fleurs," the "Jeannetons" from the "Pride of Normandie;" having praised the rich and even growth of the flax field; having talked with an excellent assumption of wisdom on the well-bred and well-fed cattle which were a hobby with this courtier farmer, this Versailles Acadian, I stepped forth into the main street of Grand Pré and turned toward the house of Father Fafard. I was curiously troubled by an uneasiness as to the Black Abbé, and I knew no better antidote to a bad priest than a good one.

Chapter X

A Grand Pré Morning

WHEN I stepped off the wide grounds of Monsieur de Lamourie I was at the extreme eastern end of the village. How little did I dream that this fairest of Acadian towns was lying even now beneath the shadow of doom! I am never superstitious in the morning. Little did I dream how near was the fulfilment of Grûl's grim prophecy, or how, in that fulfilment, Grand Pré was presently to fade like an exhalation from the face of this wide green Acadian land! It pleases me, since no mortal eye shall ever again see Grand Pré as she was, to find that now I recall with clear-edged memory the picture which she made that June morning. Not only do I see her, but I hear her pleasant sounds — the shallow rushing of the Gaspereau at ebb; the mooing of the cattle on the uplands; the mellow tangle of small bell-music from the bobolinks a-hover over the dyke meadows; now and then a neighbour call from roadside to barn or porch or window; and ever

the cheery *cling-clank, cling-clank* from the forge far up the street. Not only do I hear the pleasant sounds, but the clean smells of that fragrant country come back continually with wholesome reminiscence. Oh, how the apple-blossoms breathed their souls out upon that tender morning air! How the spring wind, soft with a vital moisture, persuaded forth the obscure essences of grass and sod and thicket! How good was the salty sea-tang from the uncovered flats, and the emptied channels, and the still-dripping lines of tide-mark sedge! There was a faint savour of tar, too, at intervals, evasively pungent; for some three furlongs distant, at the end of a lane which ran at right angles to the main street, a little creek fell into the Gaspereau, and by the wharf at the creek-mouth were fishermen mending their boats for the shad-fishing.

Oh, that unjustly ignored member, the nose! How subtle and indestructible are its memories! They know the swiftest way to the sources of joy and tears. The eye, the ear, the nice nerves of the finger tip,—these have no such sway over the mysteries of remembrance. They have never been quite so intimate, for a sweet smell duly apprehended becomes a part of the very brain and blood. I have a little cream-yellow kerchief of silk laid away in many folds of scentless paper. Sometimes I untie it and look at it. How well I remember it as once it clung about the fair hair of

my young mother! I see myself, a thin, dark, grave-faced little boy, leaning against her knee and looking up with love into her face. The memory moves me—but as a picture. “Was it I?” I am able to wonder. “And did I, that dark boy, have a mother like that?” But when I bury my face in the kerchief, and inhale the faint savour it still wonderfully holds, I know, I feel it all. Once more I am in her arms, strained to her breast, my small face pressed close to her smooth neck where the tiny ripples of silken gold began; and I smell the delicate, intimate sweetness that seemed to be her very self; and my eyes run over with hot tears of longing for her kiss. I have a skirt of hers, too, laid away, and an apron; but these do not so much move me, for as a child I spoiled them with weeping into them, I think. The kerchief was not then large enough to attract the childish vehemence of my sorrow, so it was spared, till by and by I came to know and guard the priceless talisman of memory which it held.

For some minutes I stood at the street-foot, looking down the river-bank to the wharf and the boats, steeping my brain in those pleasant smells of Grand Pré. Then I turned up the street. It was all as I had left it two years before, save that then the apple-trees were green like the willows by the marsh edge; while now they were white and pink, a foam of bee-thronged sweetness sur-

ing close about the village roofs. The cottages on either side the street were low, and dazzling white with lime-wash from the Piziquid quarries. Their wide-flaring gables were presented with great regularity to the street. The roofs of the larger cottages were broken by narrow dormer windows; and all, large and small alike, were stained to a dark purplish-slate color with a wash which is made, I understand, by mixing the lime with a quantity of slaked hard-wood ash. The houses stood each with a little space before it, now neatly tilled and deeply tufted with young green, but presently to become a mass of colour when the scarlet lychnis, blue larkspur, lavender, marigolds, and other summer-blooming plants should break into flower. Far up the street, at the point where a crossroad led out over the marshes to the low, dark-wooded ridge of the island, stood the forge; and as I drew nearer the warm, friendly breath of the fire purred under the anvil's clinking. Back of the forge, along the brink of the open green levels, stood a grove of rounded willow-trees. Further on, a lane bordered with smaller cabins ran in a careless, winding fashion up the hillside; and a little way from the corner, dwarfing the roofs, loftily overpeering the most venerable apple-trees, and wearing a conscious air of benignant supervision, rose the church of Grand Pré, somewhat squatly capacious in the body, but with a spire

that soared very graciously. Just beyond, but hidden by the church, I could see in my mind's eye the curé's cottage. My footsteps hastened at the thought of Father Fafard and his greeting.

The men of the village were at that hour mostly away in the fields; but there were enough at home about belated barnyard business to halt me many times with their welcomes before I got to the forge. These greetings, in the main, had the old-time heartiness, making me feel my citizenship in Grand Pré. But there was much eager interrogation as to the cause of my presence, and a something of suspicion, at times, in the acceptance of my simple answer, which puzzled and vexed me. It was borne in upon me that I was thought to be commissioned with great matters, and my frankness but a mask for grave and dubious affairs.

Outside the forge, when at last I came to it, stood waiting two horses, while another was inside being shod. The acrid smell of the searing iron upon the hoof awoke in my breast a throng of boyish memories, which, however, I had not time to note and discriminate between; for the owners of the two horses hailed and stopped me. They were men of the out-settlements, whom I knew but well enough to pass the weather with. Yet I saw it in their eyes that they had heard something of my arrival. Question hung upon their lips. I gave them no time for it, but with as little patience as

consisted with civility I hastened into the forge and seized the hand of the smith, my old friend and my true friend, Nicole Brun.

"Master Paul!" he cried, in a voice which meant a thousand welcomes; and stood gripping my fingers, and searching me with his eyes, while the iron in his other hand slowly faded from pink to purple.

"Well," I laughed presently, "there is one man in Grand Prè, I perceive, who is merely glad to greet me home, and not too deeply troubled over the reasons for my coming."

"Hein! You've seen it and heard it already," said Nicole, releasing my fingers from his knotty grasp, and throwing back his thick shoulders with a significant shrug. "Mother Pêche told me last night of your coming; and last night, too, the Black Abbé passed this way. The town is all of a buzz with reasons, this way and that. And some there be that are for you, but more that fear you, Master Paul."

"Fear me?" I asked, incredulous.

"Along of the Black Abbé and Vaurin!" answered Nicole, as if explaining everything.

"That Vaurin—curse him!" I exclaimed angrily. "But what say *you*, Nicole? I give you my word, as I have told every one, I come to Grand Prè on my own private business, and mix not at all with public matters."

"So?" said he, lifting his shaggy eyebrows in plain surprise. "But in any case it had been all the same to me. I'm a quiet man, and bide me here, taking no part but to forge an honest shoe for the beast of friend or foe; but I'm *your* man, Master Paul, through thick and thin, as my father was your father's. 'Tis a hard thing to decide, these days, what with Halifax and the English governor pulling one way, Quebec and the Black Abbé pulling the other, and his reverence's red devils up to Lord knows what! But I follow you, Master Paul, come what may! I'm ready."

I laid my hand laughingly on his shoulder, and thanked him.

"I believe you, my friend," said I. "And there's no man I trust more. But I've no lead to set you just now. Be true to France, in all openness, and lend no ear to treachery, is all I say. I am the king's man, heart and soul; but the English are a fair foe, and to be fought with fair weapons, say I, or not at all."

"Right you are, Master Paul," grunted Nicole in hearty approval. There was a triumphant grin on his square and sooty face, which I marked with a passing wonder.

"And as for this Vaurin," I continued, "I spit on all such sneaking fire-in-the-night, throat-slitting, scalp-lifting rabble, who bring a good cause to bitter shame!"

I spoke with unwonted heat; for I was yet wroth at the commandant for his misuse of my ignorance, and smarting raw at the notion of being classed in with Vaurin.

I observed that at my words Nicole's triumphant grin was shot across with a sort of apprehension; and at the same moment I observed, too, a sturdy stranger, apparently the owner of the horse now being shod. He sat to the right of the forge fire, far back against the wall; but as I finished he sprang to his feet and came briskly forward.

"Blood of God," he snarled blasphemously, "but this is carrying the joke too far! You play your part a trifle too well, young man. Let me counsel you to keep a respectful tongue in your head when you speak of your betters."

"Faith, and I do that!" said I pleasantly, taking note of him with care. From his speech I read him to be a Gascon of the lower sort; while from his dress I judged that he played the gentleman adventurer. But I set him down for a hardy rogue.

"But from whom do I receive in such ill language such excellent good advice?" I went on.

"One who can enforce it!" he cried roughly, misled by my civil air. "I'm a friend of Captain Vaurin, whom I have the honour to serve. It seems to suit some purpose of yours just now to deny it, but you were with him yesterday, in coun-

sel with him, a messenger from Colonel Vergor to him; and you came on here at his orders."

"That is a lie!" said I very gently, smiling upon him. "The other rascal, Vergor, tricked me with his letter; and he shall pay for it!"

Thus given the lie, but so softly, the fellow uttered a choking gurgle betwixt astonishment and rage, and I calculated the chance of his rushing upon me without warning. He was, as I think I said, a very sturdy figure of a man, though not tall; and he gave sign of courage enough in his angry little eyes and jutting chin. A side glance at Nicole showed me that he was pleased with the turn of affairs, and had small love for the stranger. I caught at the doorway the faces of the two men from the out-settlements, with eyes and ears all agog.

The stranger gulped down his rage and set himself to ape my coolness.

"Whatever your business with my captain," said he, "we are here now as private gentlemen, and you must give me satisfaction. Be good enough to draw, monsieur."

Now, I was embarrassed and annoyed by this encounter, for I certainly could not fight one of Vaurin's crew, and I was in haste to see Father Fafard. I cursed my folly in having been led into such an unworthy altercation. How most quickly should I get out of it?

"I am a captain in the king's service," said I abruptly, "and I cannot cross swords but with a gentleman."

The fellow spluttered in a fine fury, more or less assumed, I must believe. His oaths were of a sort which grated me, but having delivered himself of them he said:

"I too serve the king. And I too, I'd have you know, am a gentleman. None of your Canadian half-breed seigneurs, but a gentleman of Gascony. Out with your sword, or I spit you!"

"I'm very sorry," I answered smoothly, "that I cannot fight with one of Vaurin's cut-throats, for I perceive you to be a stout-hearted rascal who might give me a good bout. But as for the gentleman of Gascony, faith, my credulity will not stand so great a tax. From your accents, Monsieur, I could almost name the particular sty by the Bordeaux waterside which must claim the distinction of your birth."

As I had calculated, this insult brought it. My prod had struck the raw. With a choking curse the fellow sprang at me naked handed, blind in his bull strength.

I dropped one foot to the rear, met and stopped the rush by planting my left fist in his face, then gave him my right under his jaw, with the full thrust of my body, from the foot up. It was a beautiful trick, learned of an English prisoner at

Montreal, who had trained me all one winter in the fistic art of his countrymen. My impetuous antagonist went backward over the anvil, and seemed in small haste to pick himself up. The spectators gaped at the strange tactics; and Nicole, as I bade him good-by, chuckled:

"There'll be trouble for this somewhere, Master Paul! Watch out sharp — and don't go 'round o' nights without taking me along. Le Fûret is not nicknamed 'The Ferret' for nothing!"

"All right, my friend," said I; "when I want a guard I'll send for you."

I went off toward Father Fafard's, pleased with myself, pleased with the English captain who had taught me such a useful accomplishment, and pleased, I confess, with Vaurin's minion for having afforded me such a fair chance to display it.

Chapter XI

Father Fafard

THE incident at the forge, as it seemed to me, was one to scatter effectually any rumours of my connection with Vaurin, and I congratulated myself most heartily upon it. It could not fail, I thought, to look well in Yvonne's eyes. It confirmed me in my resolve to go to Canard that afternoon, and perhaps to Pereau, getting my uncle's business off my hands, and not returning to De Lamourie Place till I might be sure that the circumstances had been heard and well digested there. Having this course settled in my mind, I passed the church, entered the gate between its flowering lilac-bushes, and hastened up the narrow path to Father Fafard's door. Ere I could reach it the good priest stood upon his threshold to greet me, both hands out, his kind grey eyes half closed by the crowding smiles that creased his round and ruddy face.

"My boy!" he said. "I have looked for you

all the morning. Why didn't you come to me last night?"

His voice, big, yet low and soft, had ever quaintly reminded me of a ripe apple in its mellow firmness.

Both hands in his, I answered, bantering him:

"But, father, the church gave me work to do last night. Could I neglect that? I had to see that the Reverend Father La Garne did not turn aside from his sacred ministrations to burn down the houses of my friends."

The kind face grew grave and stern.

"I know! I know!" he said. "This land of Acadie is in an evil case. But come, let us eat, and talk afterwards. I have waited for you far past my hour."

He turned into his little dining-room, a very plainly furnished closet off the kitchen.

I was hungry, so for a space there was no talk, while the fried chicken and barley cakes which the brown old housekeeper set before us made rapid disappearance. Then came sweet curds with thick cream, and sugar of the maple grated over them,—a dish of which delectable memories had clung to me from boyhood. This savory and wholesome meal done, Father Fafard brought out some dark-red West Indian rum which smelled most pleasantly. As he poured it for me he tapped the bottle and said:

"This comes to us by way of Boston. These

English have an excellent judgment in liquor, Paul. It is one of our small compensations."

I laughed, thinking of the scant concern it was to Father Fafard, ever, for all his fineness of palate, one of the most abstemious of men. As we sat at ease and sipped the brew he said:

"I hear you faced down the Black Abbé last night, and fairly drove him off the field."

"I had that satisfaction," said I, striving to look modest over it.

"He gave way to you, the Black Abbé himself, who browbeats the commandant at Beauséjour, and fears no man living,—unless it be that mad heretic Grûl, perchance! And he yielded to your authority, my boy? How do you account for the miracle?"

Now it had not hitherto seemed to me so much of a miracle, and I was a shade nettled that it should seem one to others. I was used to controlling violent men, and why not meddling priests?

"I suppose he saw I meant it. Perhaps he respected the king's commission. I know not," said I with indifference.

Father Fafard smiled dryly.

"I grant," said he, "that you are a hard man to cross, Paul, for all your graciousness. But La Garne would risk that, or anything; and he cares for the king's commission only when it suits him to care for it. Oh, no! If he gave way to you he

believed you were doing his work, and he would not interfere. What *is* your errand to Acadie, Paul?" he added, suddenly leaning forward and searching my face.

I felt myself flush with indignation, and half rose from my seat. Then I remembered that he knew nothing of my reasons for coming, and that his question was but natural. This cooled me. But I looked him reproachfully in the eyes.

"Do *you* think me a conspirator and a companion of cut-throats?" I asked. "I have no public business to bring me here to Grand Pré, father. I got short leave from my general, my first in two years, and I have come to Acadie for my own pleasure and for no reason else. My word!"

He leaned back with an air of relief.

"It is, of course, enough, Paul," said he heartily. "But in these bad days one knows not what to expect, nor whence the bolt may fall. There is distrust on all sides. As for my unhappy people, they are like to be ground to dust between the upper stone of England and the lower stone of France." He sighed heavily, looking out upon his dooryard lilacs as if he thought to bid them soon farewell. Then the kindly glance came back into his eyes, and he turned them again upon me.

"But why," he inquired, "did you go first to Monsieur de Lamourie's, instead of coming, as of old, at once to me?"

I hesitated; then decided to speak frankly, so far as might seem fitting.

"Grûl warned me," said I, "that Mademoiselle de Lamourie was in danger. I dared not delay."

"Why she in especial?" he persisted, gravely teasing, as was his right and custom. "Were not monsieur and madame in like peril of the good abbé's hand?"

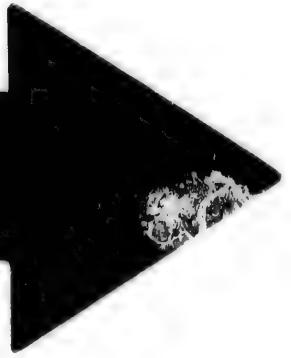
"It was her peril that most concerned me," I said bluntly.

He studied my face, and then, I suppose, read my heart, which I made no effort to veil. The smile went from his lips.

"I fear you love the girl, Paul," said he very gently. "I am sorry for you, more sorry than I can say. But you are too late. Were you told about the Englishman?"

"I met him," said I, with a voice less steady than I desired it to be, for my heart was straightway in insurrection at the topic. "Madame told me, incidentally. But it is *not* too late, father! I may call it so when she is dead, or I."

"It is your hurt that speaks in haste," said he rebukingly. "But you know you are wrong, and such words idle. Indeed, my dear, dear boy, I would you had her, not he. But her troth is solemnly plighted, and he is a good man and fair to look at; though I like him not over well. As he was a Protestant, I long stood out against him;



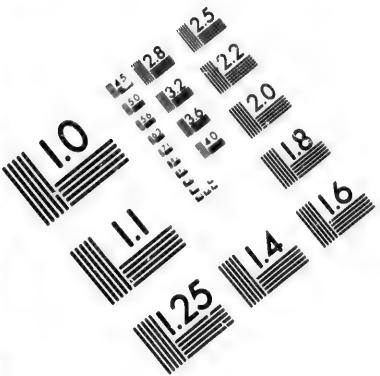
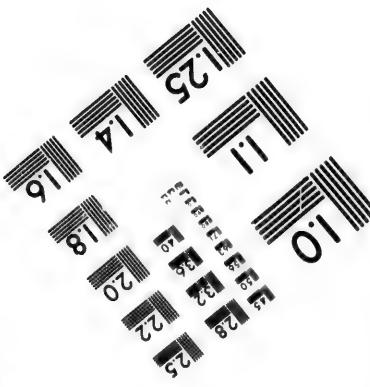
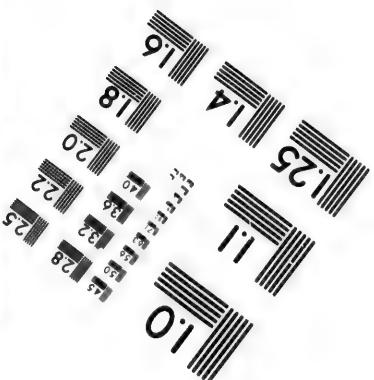
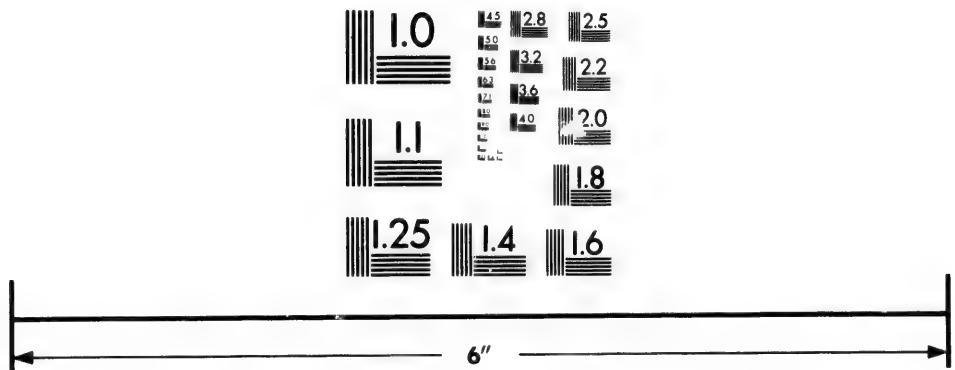
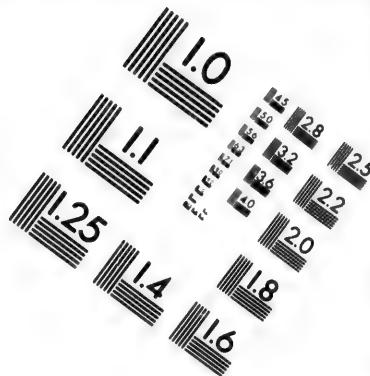


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but Giles de Lamourie is now half English at heart, and Yvonne is wilful. Why were you not here to help me a half year back, my boy?"

"Ay! why not?" I exclaimed bitterly, gripping my pewter mug till it lost all semblance of a mug. "And why was I a fool, a blind, blind dolt, when I *was* here, two years back? But I am here now. And you shall see I am not too late!"

"You speak rashly, Paul," said he, with a trace of sternness. "You may be sure, however much I love you, I will not help you now in your wicked purpose. Would you make her false to her word?"

"Her word was false to her heart, that I know," said I. "Better be false for a little than for a lifetime, and two lives made as one death for it."

The round, kindly face smiled ironically at the passion which had crept into my voice.

"You speak now as a poet, I think, Paul," said he. "I suppose I must allow for some hyperbole and not be too much alarmed at your passion. Yet I must confess you seem to me too old for this child-talk of life and death, as if they were both compassed in a woman's loving or not loving."

"I speak with all sobriety, father," said I, "and I speak of that which I know. Forgive me if I suggest that you do less."

The priest's eyes shaded as with sorrowful re-

membrance, and he looked out across the apple-trees as he answered:

" You think I have always been a priest," said he; " that I have always dwelt where the passions and pains of earth can touch me only as reflected from the hearts of others — the hearts into which I look as into a mirror. How should I understand what I see in such a mirror, if I had not myself once known these things that make storm in man's life? I have loved, Paul."

" How much? " I asked.

" Enough," said he, " to lose her for her own good. I was a poor student with no prospects. She was beautiful and good, and her duty to her family required that she should marry as they wished. I had no right to her. I could not have her. For her love I vowed to live single — and I have come to know that the love of a woman is but one small part of life."

" Plainly," said I, watching him with interest, " there was no resistless compulsion in that love. But you are right; of most lives love is but an accident, the plaything of propinquity. It dimly feels its insignificance in the face of serious affairs, and gives place, as it should. But there is a love which is different. Few, indeed, are they who are born to endure the light of its uncovered face; but all have heard the dim tradition of it. I cannot make you understand it, father, any more than I

could teach a blind man the wonder of that radiating blue up there. That old half-knowledge of yours has sealed your eyes more closely than if you had never known at all. I can only tell you there is a love to which life and death must serve as lackeys."

As he listened, first astonishment marked his face; for never before had I spoken to him save as a boy to his trusted master. Then indignation struggled with solicitude. Then he seemed to remember that I was not a boy, but a man well hardened in the school of stern experience. Therefore he seemed to decide that I must be treated with mild banter. He lay back in his chair, folded his well-kept hands on his ample stomach, and chuckled indulgently before replying.

"The fever is upon you, Paul," said he. "Poet and peasant alike must have it. In this form it is not often more dangerous or more lasting than measles; but unlike measles, alas, one attack grants no immunity from another!"

I loved him well, and his jibes stung me not at all. I fell comfortably into his mood.

"A frontier fighter must be his own physician," I said lightly. "You shall see how I will medicine this fever."

"I will trust Yvonne de Lamourie's plighted word," he said gravely, after a pause of some moments. Then a wave of strong feeling went over

his face, and he broke out with a passion in his voice :

" Paul, do not misjudge me. I love you as my own son, and there is no one else in the world whom I love as I love Yvonne de Lamourie. Not her own father can love her as I do, a lonely old man to whom her face is more than sunshine. Do I not desire with all my heart that you should have her — you whom I trust, you whom I know to be a true son of the church? But as I must tell you again, though it grieves me to say it, you have come too late. The Englishman's faithful and unselfish devotion has won her promise. She will keep it, and she will bring him into the church. Moreover, she owes him more than she can ever repay. Giles de Lamourie has long been under the suspicion of the English government, who accused him, unjustly, of having had a hand in the massacre of the New Englanders here. His estates were on the very verge of confiscation; but Anderson saved him and made him secure. That there is some dreadful fate even now hanging over this fair land I feel assured. What it may be I dare not guess; but in the hour of ruin George Anderson will see that the house of De Lamourie stands unscathed. For, Paul, I know that Heaven is with the English in this quarrel. Our iniquity in high places has not escaped unseen."

"Grûl's prophecy touches even you," I remarked, rising. "But I must go, father. I have errands across the dyke, for my uncle; and I would be back for the night, if possible, to ease the fears of Monsieur de Lamourie. And as for *her*—be assured I will use none but fair means in the great venture of my life."

"I am assured of it, Paul," said he, grasping my outstretched hand with all affection. "And I am assured, too, that you will utterly and irremediably fail. Therefore I am the less troubled, my dear boy, though my heart is sore enough for you."

"I can but thank God," I retorted cheerfully, retreating down the path between the lilacs, "that the offices of priest and prophet do sometimes exist apart."

As I looked back at him, before turning down the lane, his kind, round, ruddy face was puckered solicitously over a problem which grew but the harder as he pondered it.

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Chapter XII

Le Fûret at the Ferry

FROM the curé's I cut across the fields to escape further delay, and so, avoiding the westerly skirts of the village, came out upon the Canard trail. I made the utmost haste, for the afternoon was already on the wane. For some three miles beyond the village the road runs through a piece of old woods, mostly of beech, birch, and maple, whose young greenery exhaled a most pleasant smell on the fresh June air. By the wayside grew the flowers of later spring, purple wake-robin, the pink and white wild honeysuckle, the solitary painted triangle of the trillium, and the tender pink bells of the linnæa, revealed by their perfume. Once I frightened a scurrying covey of young partridges. As for the squirrels, chipmunks, and rabbits, so pert were they in their fearless curiosity that I was ready to pretend they were the same as those which of old in my boyish vagabondings I had taught to be unafraid of my approach. With the one half of

my soul I was a boy again, retraversing these dear familiar woods; the other half of me, meanwhile, was bowed with a presentiment of disaster. The confidence in the priest's tone still thrilled me with fear. But under whatever alternations of hope and despair, deep down in my heart where the great resolves take form deliberately my purpose settled into the shape which does not change. By the time I emerged from the wood I was ready to laugh at Father Fafard or any one else who should tell me that success would not be mine at the last.

"She may not know it yet herself, but she is mine," I declared to the open marshes, as I set foot out upon the raised way which led over to the Habitants Ferry.

The ferry-boat which crosses the deep and turbid tide of the Habitants is a clumsy scow propelled by a single oar thrust out from the stern. The river is hardly passable save for an hour on either side of full flood. The rest of the time it is a shrinking yet ever-turbulent stream which roars along between precipitous banks of red engulfing slime. When I reached the shore of this unstable water it lacked but a few minutes of flood. The scow was just putting off for the opposite shore, with one passenger. I recognized the ferryman, yellow Ba'tiste Chouan, ever a friend to me in the dear old days. I shouted for him to wait.

The scow was already some half score feet from land, but Ba'tiste, seeing the prospect of more silver, stopped and made as if to turn back. At once, however, his passenger interfered, with vehement gestures, and eager speech which I could not hear. Eying him closely, I perceived that it was none other than that ruffian of Vaurin's whom I had so incontinently discomfited at the forge. His haste I could now well understand, and I saw him urging it with such effective silvery argument that Ba'tiste began to yield.

"Ba'tiste," I cried sharply, "don't you know me? Take a good look at me; my haste is urgent."

My voice caught him. "*Tiens!* It's Master Paul," he cried, and straightway thrust back to shore, calmly ignoring threats and bribes alike.

As I sprang aboard and grasped Ba'tiste's gaunt claw I expected nothing less than a second bout with my adversary of the morning. But he, while I talked with the ferryman of this and that, according to the wont of old acquaintances long apart, kept a discreet silence at the other end of the scow, where, as I casually noted, he stood with folded arms looking out over the water. A scarlet feather stuck foppishly in his dark cap became him very well; and I could not but account him a proper figure of a man, though somewhat short.

Presently, at a pause in our talk, he turned and

approached us. To my astonishment he wore a civil smile.

"I was in the wrong this morning, Monsieur Grande," he said, in a hearty, frank voice such as I like, though well I know it is no certificate of an honest heart. "I interfered in a gentleman's private business; and though your rebuke was something more sharp than I could have wished, I deserved it. Allow me to make my apologies."

Now it is one of my weaknesses that I can scarce resist the devil himself if he speaks me fair and seeks to make amends.

"Well," said I reluctantly, "we will forget the incident, monsieur, if it please you. I cannot but honour a brave man always; and you could not but speak up for your captain, he not being by to speak for himself. My opinion of him I will keep behind my teeth out of deference to your presence."

"That's fair, monsieur," said he, apparently quite content. "And I will keep my nose out of another gentleman's business. My way lies to Canard. May I hope for the honour of your company on the road — since fate, however rudely, has thrown us together?"

Another weakness of mine is to be uselessly frank — to resent even politic concealment. Here was one whom I knew for an enemy. I spoke him the plain truth with a childish carelessness.

"I have affairs both at Canard and at Pereau," said I. "But I know not if I shall get so far as the latter to-night."

"Ah!" said he, "I might have known as much. Father La Garne will lie at Pereau to-night, and I am to meet Captain Vaurin there."

I turned upon him fiercely, but his face was so devoid of malice that my resentment somehow stuck in my throat. Seeing it in my face, however, he made haste to apologize.

"Pardon me, monsieur, if I imply too much, or again trespass upon your private matters," he exclaimed courteously. "But you will surely allow that, in view of your late visit to Piziquid, my mistake is a not unnatural one."

I was forced to acknowledge the justice of this.

"But be pleased to remember that it is none the less a mistake," said I with emphasis, "and one that is peculiarly distasteful to me."

"Assuredly, monsieur," he assented most civilly. And by this we were at the landing. As we stepped off I turned for a final word with Ba'tiste; and he, while giving me account of a new road to the Canard, shorter than the old trail, managed to convey a whispered warning that my companion was not to be trusted.

"It is Le Fûret," he said, as if that explained.

"That's all right, my friend," I laughed confidently. "I know all about that."

Then I turned up the new road, striding amicably by the side of my late antagonist, and busily wondering how I was to be rid of him without a rudeness.

But I might have spared myself this foolish solicitude; for presently, coming to a little lane which led up to a fair house behind some willows, he remarked :

"I will call here, monsieur, while you are visiting at Machault's yonder; and will join you, if I may, the other side of the pasture."

With the word he had bowed himself off, leaving me wondering mightily how he knew I was bound for Simon Machault's — as in truth I was, on matters pertaining to my uncle's rents. I was sure I had made no mention of Machault, and I was nettled that the fellow should so appear to divine my affairs. I made up my mind to question him sharply on the matter when he should rejoin me.

But I was to see no more of him that day. After a pleasant interview with Machault, whence I departed with my pockets the heavier for some rentals paid ungrudgingly to the Sieur de Briart, I continued my way alone, my mind altogether at ease as to the house of De Lamourie, since I had learned that the Black Abbé and the blacker Vaurin would lie that night at Pereau. Then suddenly, as I was about to turn into the yard of another farmhouse, one of those strange things

happened w^h:~h we puzzle over for a time and afterward set down among the unaccountable. Some force, within or without, turned me sharp about and faced me back toward Grand Pré. Before I realized at all what I was up to, I was retracing my steps toward the ferry. But with an effort I stopped to take counsel with myself.

Chapter XIII

Unwilling to be Wise

AT first I was for mocking and laughing down so blind a propulsion, but then the thought that it was in some sort an outward expression of my great desire for Yvonne compelled me to take it with sobriety. Possibly, indeed, it meant that she was thinking of me, needing me even, at the moment; and at this I sprang forward in fierce haste lest I should be too late for the ferry. I was not going to follow blindly an impulse which I could not quite comprehend. I would not be a plaything of whims and vapours. But I would so far yield as to get safely upon the Grand Pré side of the river, pay a visit or two there which I had intended deferring to next day, and return to De Lamourie's about bed-time, too late to invite another rebuff from Yvonne. This compromise gave me peace of mind, but did not delay my pace. I was back at the ferry in a few minutes, in time to see old yellow Ba'tiste fastening up the scow as a sign that ferrying was over till next tide.

I rushed down to him with a vehemence which left no need of words. Dashing through the water-side strip of red and glistening mud I sprang upon the scow, and cried:

"If ever you loved me, Ba'tiste,—if ever you loved my father before me,—one more trip! I must be in Grand Pré to-night if I have to swim!"

His lean, yellow, weather-tanned face wrinkled shrewdly, and he cast off again without a moment's hesitation, saying heartily as he did so:

"If it only depended on what *I* could do for you, Master Paul, your will and your way would right soon meet."

"I always knew I could count on you, Ba'tiste," said I warmly, watching with satisfaction the tawny breadth of water widen out between the shore and the rear of the scow, as the ferryman strained rhythmically upon the great oar. I sniffed deep breaths of the cool, contenting air which blew with a salty bitterness from the uncovering flats; and I dimly imagined then what now I know, that when the breath of the tide flats has got into one's veins at birth he must make frequent return to them in after-life, or his strength will languish.

"So you got wind, Master Paul, of Le Fûret's return, and thought well to keep on his track, eh?" panted Ba'tiste.

"What do you mean?" I asked, awakened from my reverie.

"Didn't you know he came right back, as soon as he give you the slip?" asked Ba'tiste. "I ferried him over again not an hour gone."

"Why," I cried in surprise, "I thought he was on his way to the Black Abbé!"

Ba'tiste smiled wisely.

"He lied!" said he. "You don't know that lot yet, Master Paul. I saw you listened careless-like, but I thought you knew that was all lies about the Black Abbé and Vaurin being at Pereau. If they'd been at Pereau 'The Ferret' would ha' said they were at Piziquid."

"I'm an ass!" I exclaimed bitterly.

Ba'tiste laughed.

"That's not the name you get hereabouts, Master Paul. But I reckon you've been used to dealing with honest men."

"I believe I do trust too easily, my friend," said I. "But one thing I know, and that is this: I will make never a mistake in trusting you, and some other faithful friends whom I might name."

This seemed to Ba'tiste too obvious to need reply, so he merely wished me good fortune as I sprang ashore and made haste up the trail.

I made haste—but alas, not back toward Grand Pré! In the bitter after-days I had leisure to curse the obstinate folly which led me to carry

out my plan of delay instead of hurrying straight to Yvonne's side. But I had made up my mind that the best time to return to De Lamourie's was about the end of evening—and my dull wits failed to see in Le Fûret's action any sufficient cause to change my plans. It never occurred to me, conceited fool that I was, that the causes which had swayed the Black Abbé to my will the night before might in the meantime have ceased to work. Even had this idea succeeded in penetrating my thick apprehension, I suppose it would have made no difference. I should have felt sure that the abbé's scoundrel crew would choose none but the dim hours after midnight for anything their malice might intend. The fact is, I had been yielding to inauthoritative impulses and vague premonitions till the reaction had set in, determining me to be at all costs coolly reasonable. Now Fortune with her fine irony loves to emphasize the fact that the slave of reason often proves the most pitiable of fools. Such was I when I turned to my right from the ferry, and strode through the scented, leafy dusk to the open flax-fields of the Le Marchand settlement, though the disregarded monitor within me was urging that I should turn to the left, through the old beech woods, to Grand Pré—and Yvonne.

The Le Marchand settlement in those days consisted of six little farms, each with its strip of

upland flax-field and apple-orchard, and a bit of rich, secluded dyke held in common. All the Le Marchands — father and five sons — still owned their hereditary allegiance to the Sieur de Briart, and paid him their little rents as occasion offered. My welcome was not such as is commonly accorded to the tax-gatherer. These retainers of my uncle's made me feel that I was myself their seigneur; and their rents, paid voluntarily and upon their own reckonings, were in effect a love-gift. I supped — chiefly upon buckwheat cakes — at the cottage of Le Marchand *père*, and then, dark having fallen softly upon the quiet fields, I set out at a gentle pace for Grand Pré village.

Soon after I got into the still dark of the woods the moon rose clear of the Gaspereau hills, and thrust long white fingers toward me through the leafage. The silence and the pale, elusive lights presently got a grip upon my mood, and my anxieties doubled, and trebled, and crowded upon each other, till I found myself walking at a breathless pace, just the hither side of a run. I stopped short, with a laugh of vexation, and forced myself to go moderately.

I was perhaps half way to Grand Pré, and in the deepest gloom of the woods, — a little dip where scarce a moonbeam came, — when, with a suddenness that gave even my seasoned nerves a start, a tall figure stood noiselessly before me.

I clapped my hand upon my sword and asked angrily:

"Who are you?"

But even as I spoke I knew the apparition for Grûl. I laughed, and exclaimed:

"Pardon me, Mysterious One. And pray tell me why you are come, for I am in some haste!"

"Haste?" he reechoed, with biting scorn. "Where was your haste two hours ago? Fool, poor fool, staying to fill your belly and wag your chin with the clod-hoppers! You are even now too late."

"Too late for what?" I asked blankly, shaken with a nameless fear.

"Come and see!" was the curt answer; and he led the way forward to a little knoll, whence, the trees having fallen apart, could be had a view of Grand Pré.

There was a red light wavering at the back of the village, and against it the gables stood out blackly.

"I think you promised to guard that house!" said Grûl.

But I had no answer. With a cry of rage and horror I was away, running at the top of my speed. The Abbé's stroke had fallen; and I—with a sickness that clutched my heart—saw that my absence might well be set down to treachery.

Chapter XIV

Love Me, Love my Dog

AS I emerged from the woods I noted that the glare was greater than before. But before I reached the outskirts of the village it had begun to die down. My wild running up the main street attracted no attention — every one able to be about was at the fire.

I have no doubt that I was not long in covering those two miles from the western end of the village to the De Lamourie farm — but to me they seemed leagues of torment. At last I reached the gate, and dashed panting up the lane.

I saw that the house was already in ruins, though still burning with a fierce glow. I saw also, and wondered at it, that there had been no attempt made to quench the flames. There were no water buckets in view; there was no confusion of household goods as when willing hands throng to help; and the out-buildings, which might easily have been saved, were only now getting fairly into blaze. Across my confusion and pain there flashed

a sense of the Black Abbé's power. This fire was his doing — and none dared interfere to mitigate the stroke lest the like should fall upon them also. My eyes searched the mass of staring, redly lit faces, expecting to find some one of the De Lamourie household; but in vain. Presently I noticed that every one made way for me with an alacrity too prompt for mere respect; and I grew dully conscious that I was an object of shrinking aversion to my old fellow-villagers. My rage at the villain priest began to turn upon these misjudging fools. But I knew not what to say; I knew not what to do. I pushed roughly hither and thither, demanding information, but getting only vague and muttered replies.

"Where are they?" I asked again and again, and broke out cursing furiously; but every one I spoke to evaded a direct answer.

"Have that arch fiend and his red devils carried them off?" I asked at last; and to this I got hushed, astonished, terrified replies of —

"No, monsieur!" and, "No indeed, monsieur! They have escaped!" and, "Oh, but no, monsieur!"

Flinging myself fiercely away from the crowd, I rushed to look into a detached two-story out-building which had but now got fairly burning. I wondered if there were no stuff in it which I might rescue. The smoke and flame were pouring so

hotly from the door that I could not see what was inside. But as I peered in, my face shaded with my hand from the scorching glare, I heard a faint, pitiful mewing just above me, and looked up.

There, on the sill of a window of the second story, a window from which came volumes of smoke, but of flame only a slender, darting tongue, crouched a white kitten. With a curious gripping at my heart I recognized it as one which I had seen playing at Yvonne's feet the evening before. I remembered how it was forever pouncing with wild glee upon the tip of her little slipper, forever being gently rolled over and tickled into fresh ecstasies. The scene cut itself upon my brain as I ran for a yet undamaged ladder, which I noticed leaning against a shed near by.

The action doubtless filled the crowd with amazement, but no one raised a hand to help me. The ladder was long and very awkward to manage, but in little more than the time it takes to tell of it I got it up beside the window and sprang to the rescue. By this time, however, the flames were spouting forth. The moment I came within reach of it the little animal leapt upon me and clung with frantic claws. A vivid sheet of flame burst out in my very face, hurling me from the ladder; yet I succeeded in alighting on my feet, jarred, but whole. There was a smell of burnt hair in my nostrils, and I saw that the

kitten's coat, no longer white, was finely crisped. But what I smelt was not all kitten's hair. Lifting my hand to my bitterly smarting face, I found my own locks, over my forehead, seriously diminished, while my once fairly abundant eyebrows and eyelashes were clean gone. My moustache, however, had escaped — and even at that moment, when my mind was surely well occupied with matters of importance, I could feel a thrill of satisfaction. A man's vanity is liable to assert itself at almost any crisis; and it did not occur to me that a man lacking eyebrows and eyelashes could not hope to be redeemed from the ridiculous by the most luxuriant moustache that ever grew.

Half dazed, I stared about me, wondering what was next to be done. Suddenly I thought — "Why, of course; they have gone to Father Fafard's!"

The kitten clung to me, mewing piteously, and I was embarrassed by it. First I dropped it into a large currant bush, where, as I thought, it would not be trodden upon. Then, remembering that it was Yvonne's, I snatched it up, and with a grim laugh at the folly of my solicitude over so small a matter strode off with it toward the parsonage. I passed in front of the swaying crowd; and some one, out of sight, tittered. I had begun to forget the fool rabble of villagers, — to regard them as a painted mob in a picture, or as wooden puppets, —

but their reality was borne back upon me at that giggle. I walked on, scowling upon the faces which shrank into gravity under my eye, till at last I noticed a kind-looking girl. Into her arms, without ceremony, I thrust the little animal; and as she took it I said:

"It belongs to Mademoiselle de Lamourie.
Take care of it for her."

Not waiting to hear her answer, I was off across the fields for the parsonage.

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Chapter XV

Ashes as it were Bread

ALL this had come and gone as it were in a dream, and it seemed to me that I yet panted from my long race. I had seen nothing, meanwhile, of the Black Abbé or of his painted pack. Spies, however, he had doubtless in plenty among those gaping onlookers; and his devilish work yet lighted me effectually on my way across the wet fields. The glow was like great patches of blood upon the apple-trees, where the masses of bloom fairly fronted the light. The hedge-row thickets took on a ruddy bronze, a sparkle here and there as a wet leaf set the unwonted rays rebounding. The shadows were sharply black, and strangely misleading when they found themselves at odds with those cast by the moon. The scene, as I hastened over the quiet back lots, was like the unreal phantasmagoria of a dream. I found myself playing with the idea that it all *was* a dream, from my meeting with old Mother Pêche here — yes, in this very field — the

night before to the present breathless haste and wild surmising. Then the whole bitter reality seemed to topple over, and fall upon me and crush me down. Not only was Yvonne pledged to another, but through grossest over-confidence I had failed her in her need, and worst of all, the thought that made my heart beat shakingly, she believed me a traitor. It forced a groan to my lips, but I ran on, and presently emerged upon the lane a few paces from Father Fafard's gate.

As I turned in the good priest came and stood in the doorway, peering down the lane with anxious eyes. Seeing me, he sprang forward and began to speak, but I interrupted him, crying:

"Are they here? I must see them."

"They will not see you, Paul. They would curse you and shut their ears. They believe *you* did it."

"But you, father, *you*," I pleaded, "can undeceive them. Come with me." And I grasped him vehemently by the arm.

But he shook me off, with a sort of anxious impatience.

"Of course, Paul, I *know* you did not do it. I *know* you, as *she* would, too, if she loved you," he cried, in a voice made high and thin by excitement. "I will tell them you are true. But—where is Yvonne?" And he pushed past me to the gate, where he paused irresolutely.

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"Don't tell me she is not with you!" I cried.

"She ran out a minute ago, not telling us what she was going to do," he answered.

"But what for? What made her? She must have had some reason! What was it?" I demanded, becoming cold and stern as I noted how his nerves were shaken.

He collected himself with a visible effort, and then looked at me with a kind of slow pity.

"I had but now come in," said he, "and thoughtlessly I told Madame a word just caught in the crowd. You know that evil savage, Etienne le Bâtard. Or you don't, I see; but he's the red right-hand of La Garne, and it was he executed yonder outrage. As he was leading his cut-throats away in haste, plainly upon another malignant enterprise, I heard him tell one of my parishioners what he would do. The man is suspected of a leaning to the English; and the savage said to him with significance:

"'I go now to Kenneticook, to the yellow-haired English Anderson. Neither he nor his house will see another sun.'

"I had thought perhaps you were right, Paul, and that Yvonne had promised herself to the Englishman more in esteem than love; but she cried out, with a piteous, shaken voice, that he must be warned—that some one *must* go to him and save him. With that she rushed from the

house, and we have not seen her since. But stay — what have *you* said or done to her, Paul? Now that I see her face again, I see remorse in it. What have you done to her?"

I made no answer to this sharp question, it being irrelevant and my haste urgent. But I demanded :

"Where could she go for help?"

"I don't know," he answered, "unless, perhaps, to the landing."

"The tide is pretty low," said I, pondering, "but the wind serves well enough for the Piziquid mouth. Where do you suppose the savages left their canoes?"

"Oh," said he positively, "well up on the Piziquid shore, without doubt. They came over on the upper trail, and they must be now hurrying back the same way. They cannot get up the Kennebecook, by that route, till a little before dawn."

"I have time, then!" I exclaimed, and rushed away.

"Where are you going? Paul! Paul! What will you do?" he cried after me.

"I will save him!" I shouted as I went. "Come you down to the landing, the Gaspereau wharf, and get Yvonne if she's there."

Glancing back, I saw that he followed me.

My heart was surging with gratitude to God for this chance. I vowed to save Anderson, though it

cost me my own life. If Yvonne loved him she should then owe her happiness to me. If she did not love him she would see that I was quite other than the traitor she imagined. Strange to say, I felt no bitterness against her for so misjudging me. It seemed to me that my folly had been so great that I had deserved to be misjudged. But now, here was my opportunity. I swore under my breath that it should not slip from my grasp.

It was a good two-thirds of a mile from the parsonage to the wharf, and I had time to scheme as I ran. I thought at once of Nicole, the smith,—of his boat, and his brawn, and his loyal fidelity. His boat would assuredly be at the wharf, but where should I find his brawn and his fidelity?

At his cottage, beside the forge, I stopped to ask for him.

"At the fire, monsieur," quavered his old mother, poking a troubled face from the window in answer to my thundering on the door. "What would you with him? Do not lead him into harm, Master Paul!"

But I was off without answering; and the poor, creaking, worried old voice followed in my ears:

"He takes no sides. He hurts no one, Master Paul!"

Passing the De Lamourie gate I paused to shout at the height of my lungs:

"Nicole! Nicole Brun! I want you! Nicole!
Nicole!"

"Coming, Master Paul!" was the prompt reply, out of the heart of the crowd; and in a moment the active, thick-set form appeared, bare-headed as usual, for I had never known Nicole to cover his black shock with cap or hat.

I was leaning on the fence to get my breath.

"You were there, Nicole, when I was looking for a friend?" said I, eying him with sharp question and reproach as he came up.

"You did not seem to need any one just then, Master Paul; leastwise, no one that was thereabouts," he answered, with a sheepish mixture of bantering and apology.

I ignored both. I knew him to be true.

"Will you come with me, right now, Nicole Brun?" I asked, starting off again toward the river.

"You know I will, Master Paul," said he, close at my side. "But where? What are we up to?"

"The boat!" said I. "The wind serves. I'm going to the Kenneticoon to warn Anderson that the Black Abbé is to cut his throat this night!"

I turned and looked him in the eyes as I spoke.

His long, determined upper lip drew down at my words, but his little grey eyes flashed upon mine a half-resigned, half-humorous acquiescence.

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not," he answered. "We'll be just about in time to get our own throats slit, I'm thinking,—to say nothing of the hair," he added, rubbing his crown with rueful apprehension.

"Let me have your boat, and I go alone," said I curtly. But I was sure of him nevertheless.

"I'm with you, sure, Master Paul, if you *will* go," he rejoined. "And maybe it's worth while to disturb his reverence's plans, if it *be* only an Englishman that we're taking so much trouble about."

"We must and shall save him, Nicole," I said, as deliberately as my panting breath would permit, "or I will die in the trying. He is betrothed to Mademoiselle de Lamourie, you know."

"I should say, rather, let him die for her, that a better man may live for her," he retorted shrewdly. "But as you will, Master Paul, of course!"

In the privacy of my own heart I thought extremely well of Nicole's discrimination; but I said nothing, for by this we were come to the wharf; and I saw—Yvonne!

Chapter XVI

The Way of a Maid

ALMOST to her side I came before she was aware of me, so intent she was upon her purpose. Two men of the village, fishermen whom I knew, she had summoned to her, and was passionately urging them to take her to Kenneticook. But for all her beauty, her entralling charm, they hung back doggedly — being but dull clods, and in a shaking terror at the very name of the Black Abbé. It passed my comprehension that they should have any power at all when those wonderful eyes burned upon them. Never had I seen her so beautiful as then, her face wild with entreaty, her bewildering hair half fallen about her shoulders. A white, soft-falling shawl, such as I had never before seen her wear, was flung about her, and one little hand with its live, restless fingers clutched the fabric closely to her throat, as if she had been disturbed at her toilet.

I was about to interrupt her, for there was no moment to lose if I would accomplish my purpose;

but of a sudden she seemed to realize the hopelessness of her effort to move these stolid fishermen. Flinging out her arms with a gesture of bitterness and despair, she cried, pointing to Nicole's boat:

"Push off the boat, you cowards, and I will go alone!"

And turning upon the word she found herself face to face with me.

Even in that light I could see her lips go ashen, and for a moment I thought she would drop. I sprang to catch her, but she recovered, and shrank in a kind of speechless fury from my touch. Then she found words for me, dreadful words for me to hear:

"Traitor! Assassin! Still *you* to persecute and thwart me. It is *you* they fear. It is *you* who plan the murder of that good and true man—*you* who will not let me go to warn him!" Then her voice broke into a wilder, more beseeching tone: "Oh, if you have one spark of shame, *remember!* Let them push off the boat; and let *me* go, that I may try to save him!"

Her reproaches hurt me not, but what seemed her passion for him steadied me and made me hard.

"You are mad, mademoiselle!" I answered sternly. "I am going to save him."

"As you have saved our house to-night!" she

cried, with a laugh that went through me like a sword.

"I was outwitted by my enemies — and yours, mademoiselle. I go now to warn him. Push down the boat, men. Haste! Haste!" I ordered, turning from her.

But she came close in front of me, her great eyes blazed up in my face, and she cried, "You go to see that he does not escape your hate!"

"Listen, mademoiselle," I said sharply. "I swear to you by the mother of God that you have utterly misjudged me! I am no traitor. I have been a fool; or my sword would have been at your father's side to-night. I swear to you that I go now to expiate my mistake by saving your lover for you."

The first wave of doubt as to my treason came into her eyes at this; but her lips curled in bitter unbelief. Before she could speak, I went on:

"I swear to you by — by the soul of my dead mother I will save George Anderson or die fighting beside him! You shall have your lover," I added, as I stepped toward the boat, which was now fairly afloat on the swirling current. Nicole was hoisting the sail, while one of the fishermen held the boat's prow.

I think Yvonne's heart believed me now, though her excited brain was as yet but partially convinced, or even, perhaps, as I have sometimes

dared to think in the light of her later actions, another motive, quite unrealized by herself, began to work obscurely at the roots of her being as soon as she had admitted the first doubts as to my treachery. But not even her own self-searching can unravel all the intricacies of a woman's motive. As I was about to step into the boat she passed me lightly as a flower which the wind lifts and blows. She seated herself beside the mast.

"What folly is this, mademoiselle?" I asked angrily, pausing with my hand upon the gunwale, and noticing the astonishment on Nicole's face.

Her mouth set itself obstinately as her eyes met mine.

"I am going, too," she said, "to see if you respect your mother's soul."

"You cannot!" I cried. "You will ruin our only chance. We must run miles through the woods after we land, if we are to get there ahead of La Garne's butchers. You could not stay alone at the boat"—

"I can!" said she doggedly.

"You could not keep up with us," I went on, unheeding her interruption. "And if we delayed for you we should be too late. Every moment you stay us now may be the one to cost his life."

"I am going!" was all she said.

I set my teeth into my lips. There was no alternative. Stepping quietly into the boat as if forced

to acquiesce in her decision, with my left hand I caught both little white wrists as they lay crossed, still for a moment, in her lap. I held them inexorably. At the same time I passed my right arm about the slim body, and lifted it. There was but the flutter of an instant's struggle, its futility instantly recognized; and then, stepping over the boat-side with her, I carried her to the edge of the wharf, set her softly down, sprang back into the boat, and pushed off as I did so.

"I will save him for you, mademoiselle," I said, "and, believe me, I have just now saved him *from* you!"

But she made no answer. She did not move from the place where I had set her down. There was a strange look on her face, which I could not fathom; but I carried it with me, treasured and uncomprehended, as the boat slipped rapidly down the tide.

As long as I could discern the wharf at all I could see that white form moveless at its edge. I forgot my errand. I forgot her cruel distrust. I strained my gaze upon her, and knew nothing save that I loved her.

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Chapter XVII

Memory is a Child

WHEN I could no longer discern even the shore whence we had started, I in a measure came to myself. Nicole — sagacious Nicole — had left me to my dream. He had got up the mainsail and jib unaided, and now sat like a statue at the tiller. We were in the open basin, running with a steady wind abeam. There was quite a swell on, and the waves looked sinister, cruel as steel, under the bare white moon. A fading glow still marked the spot where the De Lamourie house had stood; but save for that there was no hint of man's hand in all the wild, empty, hissing, wonderful open. Far to the left lay Blomidon, a crouching lion; and straight ahead a low, square bluff guarded the mouth of the Piziquid. I saw that we were nearing it rapidly, for Nicole's boat had legs. Once in the Piziquid mouth, we should have a hard run up against the ebb; but the wind would then be right aft, and I felt that we could stem the current and make our landing in time.

"Will this wind carry her against the Piziquid tide?" I asked Nicole. It was the first word spoken in perhaps an hour, and my voice sounded strange to me.

"We'll catch the first of the flood soon after we get inside, Master Paul," said he, in the most matter-of-fact voice in the world.

Content with this, and knowing that for the time there was nothing to do but wait, I lapsed back into my reverie.

I felt exhausted, not from bodily effort, but from emotion. My nerves and brain felt sleepy; yet nothing was further from my eyes than sleep. Situations and deeds, mental and physical crises, agonies and ecstasies and dull despair, had so trodden upon one another's heels that I was breathless. I caught at my brain, as it were, to make it keep still long enough to think. Yet I could not think to any purpose. I was aware of nothing so keenly as the sensation that had intoxicated me as I held Yvonne's unconsenting body for those few moments in my arms, while removing her from the boat. To have touched her at all against her will seemed a sacrilege; but when a sacrilege has seemed a plain necessity I have never been the one to balk at it. Now I found myself looking with a foolish affection at the arms which had been guilty of that sacrilege—and straightway, coming to my wits again, I glanced at

Nicole to see if he had divined the vast dimensions of my folly.

From this I passed to wondering what was truly now my hope or my despair. During all my talk with Yvonne — from the moment, indeed, when Father Fafard had told me of her agitation over Anderson's peril — I had been as one without hope, in darkness utterly. Only a great love — *the* great love, as I had told myself — could inspire this desperate and daring solicitude. And against the one great love, in such a woman as Yvonne, I well knew that nothing earthly could prevail. My own bold resolution had been formed on the theory that her betrothal was but the offspring of expediency upon respect. Now, however, either the remembrance of her touch deluded me or something in her attitude upon the wharf held significance, for assuredly I began to dream that remorse rather than love might have been the mainspring of her agitation; remorse, and pity, and something of that strange mother passion which a true woman may feel toward a man who stirs within her none of the lover passion at all. I thought, too, of the wild sense of dishonour she must feel, believing me a traitor and herself my dupe. Strange comfort this, of a surety! Yet I grasped at it. I would prove her no dupe, myself no traitor; and stand at last where I had stood before, with perhaps some advantage. And my rival —

he, I swore, should owe his life to me; a kind but cruel kind of revenge.

At last, my heart beating uncomfortably from the too swift self-chasing of my thoughts, I stood up, shook myself, and looked about me. We had rounded the bluff, and were standing up the broad Piziquid straight before the wind; and the boat was pitching hotly in the short seas where the wind thwarted the tide. I glanced at Nicole's face. It was as plaintively placid as if he dreamed of the days when he leaned at his mother's knee.

But the expression of his countenance changed; for now, from out the shadowed face of the bluff, came that bell-like, boding cry—

“Woe, woe to Acadie the Fair, for the hour of her desolation is at hand!”

Nicole looked awed.

“He knows, that Grûl!” he muttered. “It's coming quick now, I'll be bound!”

“Well, so are we, Nicole!” I rejoined cheerfully; “and that's what most concerns me at this moment.”

I peered eagerly ahead, but could not, in that deluding light, discriminate the mouth of the Kenneticook stream from its low adjacent shores. Presently the waves and pitching lessened. The ebb had ceased, and the near shore slipped by more rapidly. The slack of tide lasted but a few minutes. Then the flood set in—noisily and

with a great front of foam, as it does in that river of high tides; and the good boat sped on at a pace that augured accomplishment. In what seemed to me but a few minutes the mouth of the Kenneticook opened, whitely glimmering, before us.

Barely had I descried it when Nicole put the helm up sharp and ran straight in shore.

"What are you doing, man?" I cried, in astonishment. "You'll have us aground!"

But the words were not more than out of my mouth when I understood. I saw the narrow entrance to a small creek, emptying between high banks.

"Oh!" said I. "I beg your pardon, Nicole; I see you know what you're about all right!"

He chuckled behind unsmiling lips.

"*They'll* go up the Kenneticook in their canoes," said he. "We'll hide the boat here, where they'll not find it; and we'll cut across the ridge to the Englishman's. Quicker, too!"

The creek was narrow and winding, but deep for the first two hundred yards of its course; and Nicole, he knew every turn and shallow. We beached the boat where she could not be seen from the river, tied her to a tree on the bank above so that she might not get away at high tide, and then plunged into the dense young fir woods that clothed the lower reaches of the Piziquid

shore. There was no trail, but it was plain to me that Nicole well knew the way.

"You've gone this way before, Nicole?" said I.

"Yes, monsieur, a few times," he answered.

I considered for a moment, pushing aside the wet, prickly branches as I went. Then—

"What is her name, Nicole?" I asked.

"Julie, Master Paul," said he softly.

"Ah," said I, "then you had reasons of your own for coming with me to-night?"

"Not so!" he answered, a rebuking sobriety in his voice. "None, save my love for you and your house, Master Paul. *She* is in no peril. She is far from here, safe in Isle St. Jean this month past."

"I beg your pardon, my friend," said I, at once. "I know your love. I said it but to banter you, for I had not guessed that you had been led captive, Nicole."

"A man's way, Master Paul, when a woman wills!" said he cheerfully.

But I had no more thought of it than to be glad it had taught Nicole Brun a short path through the woods to Kenneticook.

What strange tricks do these our tangled make-ups play us! I know that that night, during that swift half-hour's run through the woods, my whole brain, my every purpose, was concentrated upon the rescue of George Anderson. The price I was

prepared to pay was life, no less. Yet all the shaping emotion of it—sharp enough, one would think, to cut its lines forever on a man's face, to say nothing of his brain — has bequeathed to me no least etching of remembrance. Of great things all I recall is that the name "Yvonne" seemed ever just within my lips—so that once or twice I thought I had spoken it aloud. But my senses were very wide awake, taking full advantage, perhaps, of the heart's preoccupation. My eyes, ears, nose, touch, they busied themselves to note a thousand trifles—and these are what come back to me now. Such idle, idle things alone remain, out of that race with death.

Things idle as these: I see a dew-wet fir-top catch the moonlight for an instant and flash to whiteness, an up-thrust lance of silver; I see the shadow of a dead, gnarled branch cast upon a mossy open in startling semblance of a crucifix — so clear, I cannot but stoop and touch it reverently as I pass; I see, at the edge of a grassy glade, a company of tall buttercups, their stems invisible, their petals seeming to float toward me, a squadron of small, light wings. I hear—I hear the rush of the tide die out as we push deeper into the woods; I hear the smooth swish of branches thrust apart; I hear the protesting, unresonant creak of the green underbrush as we tread it down, and the sharp crackle of dry twigs as we

thread the aisles of older forest; I hear, from the face of a moonlit bluff upon our left, the long, mournful *Whoo-hu-hu*—*Hoo-oo* of the brown owl. I smell the savour of juniper, of bruised snake-root, of old, slow-rotting wood; with once a fairy breath of unseen *linnæa*; and once, at the fringed brink of a rivulet, the pungent fragrance of wild mint. I feel the frequent wet slappings of branches on my face; I feel the strong prickles of the fir, the cool, flat frondage of the spruce and hemlock, the unresisting, feathery spines of the young hackmatack trees; I feel, once, a gluey web upon my face, and the abhorrence with which I dash off the fat spider that clings to my chin; I feel the noisome slump of my foot as I tread upon a humped and swollen gathering of toad-stools.

All this is what comes back to me—and Nicole's form, ever silent, ever just ahead, wasting no breath; till at last we came upon a fence, and beyond the fence wide fields, and beyond the fields a low white house with wings and outbuildings, at peace in the open moonlight.

"We are in time, Master Paul!" said Nicole quietly.

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Chapter XVIII

For a Little Summer's Sleep

WE vaulted the fence, jumped a well-cut ditch (I took note that Anderson was an excellent farmer), and ran across the fields. Presently came a deep, baying bark, and a great, light-coloured English mastiff came bounding toward us.

"Quiet, Ban!" said Nicole; and the huge beast, with a puppy-whine of delight, fell fawning at his knees. We were close to the house. Nicole stopped, and pointed to a cabin just visible at the foot of a long slope falling away to our right.

"Julie's brother may chance to be there, Master Paul," said he. "He is known for his devotion to Monsieur Anderson, whom few of us love. I will go wake the lad, if he's there, while you rouse the master."

"If you should fail to get back this way, my friend," said I, "let us meet, say, at the boat."

"Yes, at the boat," he answered confidently.

I paused, partly to get breath, partly to follow him with a look of grateful admiration, the

modest, still, strong, faithful retainer, of a type nigh vanished. He ran with his black-shock head thrust forward, and the great dog bounded beside him like a kitten.

It was the last I ever saw of Nicole Brun; nor to this day, for all my searching, have I had word of what befell him. Of the dog I learned something, seeing his skin, a year later, worn upon the shoulders of an Indian boy of the Micmac settlement. From this I could make shrewd guess at the fate of my Nicole; but the Indian lies astutely, and I could prove nothing. Sleep well, Nicole, my brave and true!

George Anderson's wide red door carried a brass knocker which grinned venomously in the moonlight. My first summons brought no answer. Then I thundered again, imperatively, and I heard Anderson's voice within, calling to servants. No servants made reply, so again I hammered, and shook fiercely at the door. Then he came himself, looking bewildered.

"Monsieur Grande, pardon me! The servants"—

"The servants have fled," I interrupted. "Come quickly! There is not a minute to lose. The abbé's savages are near. They are coming to scalp you and burn your house. We will leave them the house."

There was no sign of fear on his face, merely

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annoyance; and I saw that his mind worked but heavily.

“Come in!” he said, leading the way into a wide room looking out upon the Kenneticook tide. “I won’t be driven by those curs. They dare not touch me. At the worst, with the help of the servants we can fight them off. Sit down, monsieur.”

And he proceeded calmly to pull on his boots. I had followed him inside, wild at his obstinacy. “I tell you,” said I, “they want your scalp. The servants are traitors and have stolen away while you slept. We are alone. Come, man, come! Would you have *my* throat cut, too?” And I shook him by the shoulder.

“Why have *you* come?” he asked, unmoved, staring at me.

“For the sake of Yvonne de Lamourie!”

“Oh!” said he, eying me with a slow hostility.

“You fool!” I exclaimed. “They have burned De Lamourie’s. I swore to Yvonne de Lamourie that I would save you or die with you. If you think she loves you, stir yourself. I cannot carry you. Look at that!”

I pointed to the window. At Yvonne’s name he had risen to his feet. He looked out. A group of canoes was turning in to shore, not two furlongs distant.

"Where is she?" he inquired, alert at last.

"Safe," said I curtly, "at Father Fafard's."

Still he wavered, brave, but undecided. I think he wondered why I was her chosen messenger.

"She is in a frenzy at your peril," I said, though the words stuck in my throat. That moved him. His face lighted with boyish pleasure.

"Come!" he cried, as if he had been urging me all the time. "We'll slip out at the back, and keep the buildings between us and the river till we reach the woods."

"Have you no weapon?" I asked.

"No," said he, "but this will do," and he picked up a heavy oak stick from behind the door of the room.

Great as was the haste, I told him to lock the main door. Then as we slipped out at the back we locked the kitchen door behind us. I knew this would delay the chase; whereas if they found the doors open they would realize at once the escape of their intended victim and rush in pursuit, leaving the little matter of the fire to be seen to afterwards.

From the back door we darted to the garden, a thicket of pole beans and hops and hollyhocks. From the furthest skirt of these shelters we ran along a ditch that fenced a field of growing buckwheat, not yet high enough to give covert; but I think we kept well in shadow of the house all the

way to the woods. If afterwards our enemies tracked us with what seemed a quite unnecessary promptitude and ease, it must be remembered that our trail was not obscure.

I led the flight, intending we should strike the creek at some distance above the boat and make our way down to it along the water's edge, to cover our traces. The more we could divide our pursuers, the better would be our chances in the struggle, if overtaken. The pace I set was a sharp one, and soon, as I could perceive by his breathing, began to tell upon my heavy-limbed and unhardened companion. I slackened gradually, that he might not think I did it on his account.

In a very few minutes there arose behind us, coming thinly through the trees, the screeching war-whoop of the Micmacs, which has ever seemed to me more demoniacal and inhuman than even that of the Iroquois. Then, when we took time to glance over our shoulders, we marked a red glare climbing slowly. I judged that our escape was by this time discovered, and the wolves hot upon our trail.

To my companion, however, the sight brought a different thought.

"Where were you," he gasped, "when they attacked De Lamourie's? Did you not—promise—to save the place?"

"I was a fool," said I, between my teeth. "I thought the might of my name had saved it. I went to the Habitants. When I got back it was over."

"Ah!" was all he said, husbanding his breath.

"And they think I am a traitor — that I sanctioned it," I went on in a bitter voice.

He gave a short laugh, impatiently.

"Who?" he asked.

"Monsieur and Madame," said I, "and, possibly, Mademoiselle also."

"I could — have told them better than that," he panted; "I know a man."

Under the circumstances I did not think that modesty required me to disclaim the compliment.

A little further on he clutched me by the arm, and stopped, gasping.

"Blown," said he, smiling, as if the situation were quite casual. "Must — one minute."

I chafed, but stood motionless.

Suddenly there was a heavy crash some distance behind us.

"They are so sure, they scorn the least precaution," I whistled, foolishly wroth at their confidence. "But come, though your lungs should burst for it," I went on. "I will seize the first hiding-place."

He rallied like a man, and we raced on with fresh speed. Indeed, as I look back upon it, I see

that he did miraculously well for one so unused to the exercise.

Five minutes later we came to a small brook crossing our path from left to right toward the Kenneticook. It was a place of low, brushy shrubs under large trees.

"Keep close to me," I whispered, "and look sharp. We'll stop right here."

I stepped into the middle of the brook, and he did likewise, carefully. Setting our feet with precaution to disturb no stones, we descended the stream some twenty paces, then leapt ashore beneath the thick growth, and lay at full length like logs.

"You must get your breathing down to silence absolute," I whispered; "they will be here in two minutes."

In half a minute he had his laboring lungs in harness. Though within an arm's length of him I could hear no sound. But I could hear our pursuers thrashing along on our trail. In a minute they were at the brook, to find the trail cut short. I caught snatches of their guttural comment, and laughed in my sleeve as I realized that Anderson's very weakness was going to serve our ends. The savages never dreamed that any one could be winded from so short a run. Had their quarry gone up the brook or down it, was all their wonder. Unable to decide, they split into two parties, going

either way. From the corner of my eye, violently twisted, I marked seven redskins loping past down stream.

When they were out of hearing I touched Anderson on the shoulder.

"Come," said I, "now is our time."

"That was neat, very," he muttered, with a quiet little chuckle, rising and throwing off the underbrush like an ox climbing out of his August wallow.

"Straight ahead now for the creek," I whispered, crossing the brook; but a sound from behind made me turn. There stood a huge savage, much astonished at the apparition of us.

His astonishment was our salvation. It delayed his signal yell. As his breath drew in for it and I sprang with my sword, the Englishman was upon him naked-handed. He forgot his stick; which indeed was well, for his two hands at the redskin's throat best settled the matter of the signal. For a Quaker, whom I have heard to be peaceful folk, Anderson seemed to me a good deal in earnest. Big and supple though the savage was, he was choked in half a minute and his head knocked against a tree. Anderson let him drop, a limp carcass, upon the underbrush, and stood over him panting and clenching his fingers, ready to try a new hold.

I examined the painted mass.

"Not dead, quite!" said I. "But he's as good as dead for an hour, I should say. I think perhaps we need not finish him."

"Better finish him, and make sure," urged Anderson, to my open astonishment. "He may stir up trouble for us later."

But I was firm. I like, positively like, to kill my man in fair fight; but once down he's safe from me, though he were the devil himself.

"No," said I, "you shall not. Come on. If the poor rascal ever gets over that mauling, he'll deserve to. *That* was neat, now. You are much wasted in Quakerdom, monsieur, when your English armies are needing good men."

He was following close at my heels, as I once more led the race through the woods. He made no answer. Either he was saving his wind, or he was angry at leaving a good job unfinished. I mocked myself in my own heart, thinking:

"Paul, you fool, out of this big Quaker you have made a fighter, and he seems to like it. You may find your hands full with him, one of these days."

The thought was pleasant to me on the whole, for it is ill and dishonouring work to fight a man who is no fair match for you. That was something I never could stomach, and have ever avoided, even though at the cost of deep annoyance.

Now the ground began to rise, and I guessed

we were nearing the creek at a point where the banks were high.

"Nearly there," I whispered encouragingly, and thrust forward with sudden elation through a dense screen of underbrush. I was right — all too right. The leafage parted as parts a cloud. There was no ground beneath my feet.

"Back!" I hissed wildly, and went plunging down a dark steep, striking, rebounding, clutching now at earth and now at air. At last it appeared to me that I came partly to a stop and merely rolled; but it no longer seemed worth while to grasp at anything.

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Chapter XIX

The Borderland of Life

AGAIN I felt myself striving to grasp at something — nothing tangible now, but a long series of exhausting, infinitely confused dreams. My brain strove desperately to retain them, but the more it strove the more they slipped back into the darkness of the further side of memory; and, with one mighty effort to hold on to the last of the vanishing train, I opened my eyes, oppressed with a sense of significant things forgotten.

My eyes opened, I say; and they stared widely at a patch of sky, of an untellable blue, sparkling gem-like, and set very far off as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope. As I stared, the sense of oppression slipped from me. I sat up; but the patch of sky reeled, and I lay back again, whereupon it recovered its adorable stability. I felt tired, but content. It was good to lie there, and watch that enchanted sky, and rest from thought and dreams.

After a while, however, I turned my head, and

noted that I was in a deep, low-vaulted, tunnel-shaped cave — or rather bottle-shaped, for it was enlarged about the place where I lay. I noted that I lay on furs, on a low, couch-like ledge; and I noted, too, that there was a wind outside, for at intervals a branch was bowed across the cave-mouth and withdrawn. Then I perceived that a little jar of water and a broken cake of barley meal stood just within reach; and straightway I was aware of a most interested appetite. I sat up again and began to eat and drink. The patch of sky reeled, danced, blurred, darkened,— and again grew clear and steady. I finished the barley bread, finished the little jar of water, and sat communing lucidly with my right mind.

It was manifest that I had been saved that night of my fall over the cliff (by Anderson? — I prayed not); that I had been desperately ill — for the hands and arms upon which I looked down with sarcastic pity were emaciated; that I had been tenderly cared for — for the couch was soft, the cave well kept, and a rude screen stood at one side to shield me when the winds came into the cave-mouth. I raised my hands to my head. It was bandaged; and at one side my hair had been much cut away. But my hair — how long the rest of it was! And then came a stroke of wonder — my once smooth chin was deeply bearded! How long, how long must I

have rested here, to grow so patriarchal an adornment!

Stung to a fierce restlessness, and with a sinking at my heart, I rose, tottered to the cave-mouth, and looked out.

The world I had last seen was a green world on the threshold of June. The world I looked on now was a world of fading scarlets, the last fires of autumn fast dying from the ragged leafage.

Below, beyond trees and a field, was outspread the wide water of Minas, roughened to a cold and angry indigo under the wind. To the left, purple-dim and haze-wrapped, sat Blomidon. Grand Pré must be around to the left. Then the cave was in the face of the Piziquid bluff. So near to friends, yet hidden in a cave! What had happened the while I lay as dead? I tottered back to the couch, and fell on my back, and thought. My apprehensions were like a mountain of lead upon the pit of my stomach, and I laboured for my breath.

First I thought of Nicole as having saved me — Anderson I knew would have done his best, but was helpless among an unfriendly people, and well occupied to keep his own scalp. Yet Nicole would have taken me to Father Fafard! And surely there were houses in Grand Pré where the son of my father would have been nursed, and not driven to hide in a hole — till his beard grew! And surely, after all that had happened, Yvonne would

no longer count me a traitor, Monsieur and Madame would make amends for this dreadful misjudgment! And surely — but if so, where were all these friends?

Or what had befallen Grand Pré?

"If evil has befallen them (I did not say Yvonne) I want to die! I will go out, and fight, and die at once!" I cried, springing to my feet.

But I was still very weak, and my passion had yet further weakened me, so that I fell to the floor beside the couch; and in falling I knocked over the little jar and broke it. Even then I was conscious of a regret for the little jar; I realized that I was thirsty; and though I wanted to die, I wanted a drink of water first.

This inconsequent mood soon passed, and I crawled back on to the couch, the conviction well hammered into my brain that I was not yet fit to die with credit. And now, having found me no comfort in reason, and having faced the fact that there was nothing I could do but wait, I began to muse more temperately, and to cast about, as one will when weak, for omens and auguries. They kill time, and I hold them harmless.

But a truce to cant. Who am I that I should dare to say I laugh at or deny them? I may laugh at myself for a credulous fool. And I have no doubt whatever that most omens are sheer rubbish, more vain than a floating feather. But

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again there are things of that kindred that have convinced me, and have blessed me; and I dare not be irreverent to the mock mysteries, lest I be guilty of blaspheming those which are true. We know not—that is the most we know.

I will not agree, then, that I was a subject for laughter if, lying there alone, sick, tormented, loving without hope, fast bound in ignorance of events most vital to my love, I let my mind recall the curious prophesyings of old Mother Pêche. Of Yvonne directly I dared not suffer myself to think, lest my heart should break or stop.

When fate denies occasion to play the hero, it is often well, while waiting, to play the child. I lay quiet, looked at the patch of sky, and occupied myself with Mother Pêche's soothsayings.

Your heart's desire is near your death of hope.

At first there was comfort in this, and I took it very seriously, for the sake of the argument. But oh, these oracles, astute from the days of Delphi and Dodona! Already I could perceive that my hope was not quite dead. A thousand chances came hinting about the windows of my thought. Why might not Yvonne be safe, well,—free? The odds were that things had gone ill in my absence, but there was still the chance they might have instead gone well. Here and now, plainly, was not my death of hope, wherefore my heart's desire could not be near. I turned aside the

saying in angry contempt, and fell to feeling my ribs, my shrunk chest, my skinny arms, wondering how long before I could well wield sword again.

In this far from reassuring occupation I came upon the little leather pouch which Mother Pêche had hung about my neck. With eagerness I drew out the mystic stone and held it up before my face. The eye waned and dilated in the dim light, as if a living spirit lurked behind it.

"Le Veilleur," I said to myself. "The Watcher. Little strange is it if simple souls ascribe to you sorcery and power."

Then I remembered the snatch of doggerel which the old dame had muttered over it as she gave it to me. *While this you wear what most you fear will never come to pass.*

Curious it seemed to me that it should have stuck in my mind, though so little heeded at the time. *What most you fear.* What was it most I feared? Surely, that Yvonne should go to another. Then that, at least, should not befall while I lived, if there were force in witchcraft; for I would wear the "Watcher" till I died.

But here again my delusive little satisfaction had but a breath long to live. For indeed what most I feared was something, alas! quite different. What most I feared was calamity, evil, anguish, for Yvonne. Then, clearly, if her happi-

ness required her to be the wife of George Anderson, I could not hinder it. Could not? Nay, "*would not!*" I cried aloud; and thereupon, no longer able to drug myself with auguries, and no longer able to be dumb under the misery of my own soul, I sprang upright, strained my arms above my head, and prayed a selfish prayer:

"God, give her joy, but through me, through me!" Then I flung myself down again, and set my teeth, and turned my face to the wall. Thus I lay as one dead; and so it fell that when the door of the cave was darkened, and steps came to my bed, I did not look up.

Chapter XX

But Mad Nor-nor-west

THE steps came close to me, moved away, and were still. A sick man's curiosity soon works, and here, surely, were incalculable matters for me to find out. I turned over suddenly.

It was a fantastic figure that faced me, sitting on a billet of wood not far from the door. Withered herbs were in the high, peaked cap. The black-and-yellow mantle was drawn forward to cover the folded arms. The steely eyes were at my inmost thought.

There is no doubt I was still a sick man. I was unspeakably disappointed. Looking back upon it now, I verily believe that I expected to see Yvonne, as in a fairy tale.

"Why did you come in," I asked peevishly, twisting under those eyes, "without proclaiming—

"'Woe, woe to Acadie the Fair, for the hour of her desolation cometh ?'"

"It has come," said he quietly.

I sat up as if a spring had moved me. My eyes alone questioned.

"Beauséjour has fallen. France is driven back on Louisbourg. The men of Acadie are in chains. The women await what fate they know not. Their homes await the flame."

Here was no madman speaking.

"And — Yvonne?" I whispered.

"They all are safe, under shelter of the governor—and of Anderson," he added icily.

I had no more words for a moment. Then I asked — "And the Black Abbé?"

His sane calm disappeared. His face worked; his hands came out from under his cloak, darting like serpents; his eyes veered like pale flame. As suddenly he was calm again.

"He is at Louisbourg," said he, "at Isle St. Jean — here — there — anywhere; free, busy, still heaping and heating the fires which shall burn his soul alive."

I like a man who is in earnest; but I could think of nothing appropriate to say. After a pause I changed the subject.

"I am thirsty," said I, "and hungry too, I think, though I have eaten all the barley bread. And I'm sorry, but I've broken the jar."

From a niche in the wall he at once brought me more barley cake, with butter, and fresh milk, and some dried beef. The wholesome, homely taste

of them comes back to me now. Having eaten, I felt that nothing could be quite so good as sleep; and with grateful mutterings, half spoken, I slept.

When I woke it was the cold light of early morning that came in at the cave-mouth; and I was alone. I felt so much better that I got up at once; but ere I could reach the door a dizziness came over me, and I staggered back to my place, feeling that my hour was not yet. As I lay fretting my heart with a thousand hot conjectures, my host came in. He looked at me, but said not a word; nor could I get his tongue loosened all through our light breakfast. At last, to my obstinate repetition of the inquiry: "When shall I be strong enough to go down into Grand Pré?" he suddenly awoke and answered:

"A little way to-morrow, perhaps; and the next day, further; and within the week, if you are fortunate, you should be strong enough for anything. You will need to be, if you are going down into Grand Pré!" he added grimly.

Upon this direct telling I think I became in all ways my sane self — weak, indeed, but no longer whimsical. I felt that Grûl's promise was much better than I could have hoped. I knew there would be need of all my strength. I was a man again, no more a sick child. And I would wait.

Grûl busied himself a few minutes about the

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cave, in a practical, every-day fashion that consorted most oddly with his guise and fame. I could not but think of a mad king playing scullion. But there was none of the changing light of madness in his eyes.

Soon he seated himself at the cave-mouth, and said, pointing to a roughly shaped ledge with a wolfskin upon it:

"Come hither, now, and take this good air. It will medicine your thin veins."

Obeying gladly, I was soon stretched on the wolfskin at the very brink, as it seemed, of the open world. But it was cold. Perceiving this, he arose without a word, fetched another skin, and tucked it about me. His tenderness of touch was like a woman's.

"How can I thank you?" I began. "It is to you, I now perceive, that I owe my life. How much besides I know not!"

He waved my thanks aside something impatiently.

"Yes, I saved you," said he. "It suited me to do so. I foresaw you would some day repay me. And I like you, boy. I trust you; though in some ways you are a vain fool."

I laughed. I had such confidence in him I began to think he would bring all my desires to pass.

"And I have been wont to imagine you a mad-

man," said I. "But I seem to have been mistaken."

"Were I mad utterly as I seem," said he, in a voice which thrilled me to the bone, "it would not be strange. I am mad but on one subject; and on that I believe that God will adjudge me sanest."

He was silent for a long time, that white fire playing in his eyes; and I dared not break upon his reverie. At last I ventured, for my tongue ached with questions unasked:

"How did you find me when I fell over the cliff?" I queried. "And where was the Englishman?"

My mouth once opened, two questions instead of one jumped out.

"It was noon," said Grûl, "and I found your Englishman sitting by you waiting for the sky to fall. Had the Micmacs come instead of me, your two scalps would have risen nimbly together. He is a good man and brave; but he lacks wits. A woman could trust him to do anything but keep her from yawning!"

I grinned with the merest silly delight—a mean delight. But Grûl went on:

"He is worth a dozen cleverer men; but he fatigued me. I sent him away. I told him just how to go to reach the Piziquid settlement, whom to ask for, and what help to bring for his sick comrade. Then, knowing what was about to befall, and hav-

ing in mind a service which you will do me at a later day, and divining that you would rather be sick in a madman's cave than in an English jail, I brought you here. I was reputed a wizard in the old days in France, for having brought men back from the very gape of the grave; and I knew you would be long sick."

I looked at him, and I think my grateful love needed no words.

"And what became of the Englishman?" I asked presently.

"He appeared at last in Grand Pré," answered Grûl, "and told the truth of you, and dwelt awhile within the shadow of the chapel, to be near the guests of Father Fafard; and he got a strong guard placed in the village close at hand, that those who loved the English and feared the abbé might sleep in peace. I hear he presses for the redemption of Mademoiselle's pledge; but she, to the much vexation of Monsieur and Madame, is something dilatory in her obedience. Of course she will obey in the end. Even Father Fafard exhorts her to that, for obedience sums all virtues in a maid. But she has an absurd idea that the Englishman should present alive to her the man who saved his life, before claiming reward at hands of hers. I might have enabled him to do this; but you were not in a mind to be consulted."

"You are the wisest man I ever knew," said I,

conscious of an absurd inclination to fling myself at his feet and do penance for past supercilious underratings.

He seemed to accept the tribute as not undue, and again took up his monologue.

"Had you died, as seemed for some weeks likely for all my skill, I should have smoothed the way for the stupid Englishman; but finding that you would live, I thought to bind you to me by keeping your way open. In a few days you will be well, and must tread your own path, to triumph or disaster as your own star shall decree. In either case, I know you will stand by me when my need comes!"

"You know the merest truth," said I.

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Chapter XXI

Beauséjour, and After

NOW, while I was arranging in my mind a fresh and voluminous series of interrogations, my singular host arose abruptly and went off without a word, leaving me to rebuild a new image of him out of the shattered fragments of the old.

I saw that he was not mad, but possessed. One intolerably dominant purpose of revenge making all else little in his eyes, he was mad but in relation to a world of complex impulses; in relation to his great aim, sane, and ultimately effective, I could not doubt. But the mad grotesquerie of the part he had assumed had come to cling to him as another self, no longer to be quite sloughed off at will. To play his part well he had resolved to be it; and he was it, with reservation. Just now, Acadie fallen and his enemy for the time in eclipse, I concluded that he found his occupation gone. Therefore, after solitary and tongue-tied years, his speech flowed freely to me, as a stream broken

loose. That he had a purpose with me, I divined, would excuse him in his own sight for descending to the long unwonted relief of direct and simple utterance. I expected to find out from him many things of grave import during the few days of inaction that yet lay ahead of me. Then I would be able to act — without, perhaps, the follies of the past. Meanwhile this tender, icy, extravagant, colossal, all but omniscient character had bound me to him with the irrefragable bonds of mystery, gratitude, and trust. I was Yvonne's first, but next I felt myself fast in leash to the posturing madman Grûl.

Returning soon to my couch, I dozed and mused away the morning. At noon came no sign of my host, so I went to the niche in the wall, found food, and made my meal alone, feeling myself hourly growing in strength. Toward sunset Grûl strode in, wasted, as my convalescent nostrils averred, upon a most savoury smell. It proved to be a still steaming collop of roast venison, and after that feast I know the blood ran redder and swifter in my pulses.

"O best physician!" said I, leaning back. "And now, I beg you, assuage a little the itching of my ears."

He sat, his mantle and wizard wand flung by, upon a billet of wood against the wall, and looked not all unlike familiar mortals of the finest. Lean-

ing his chin in his long, clutching hands, as if to make gesture impossible, he leaped straight into the story:

"That fighting fire in your Anderson when he killed the savage with his hands, died out. He is still the Quaker farmer. He went to Grand Pré, and cleared your name, and told how you had saved him for Mademoiselle de Lamourie. With some inconsequence, Mademoiselle was thereupon austere with him because he had not in turn saved *you* for her. He went to Halifax and did deeds with the council—for he secured further and greater grants of land for himself and further and greater grants of land for Giles de Lamourie, with compensations for the burnings which English rule should have prevented, and with, last of all, an English guard for Grand Pré, in order that scalps of English inclination might be secure upon their owners' heads. All this was wise, and indeed plain sense—better than fighting. And he remains at Grand Pré, and waits upon Mademoiselle de Lamourie, patient on crumbs.

"In June things happened, while you slept here. The English came in ships, sailing up Chignecto water and startling the slow fools at Beauséjour. The English landed on their own side of the Missiguash. The black ruins of Beaubassin cried out to them for vengeance on La Garne." (The name, upon his lips, snarled like a wolf.)

"Vergor, the public thief, called in the men of the villages to help his garrison. Beauséjour was a nest of beavers mending the walls — but not till the torrent was already tearing through. The invaders, wading the deep mud, forced the Missiguash, and drove back the white-coat regiments. They seized the long ridge behind the fort, and set up their batteries. Fort guns and field guns bowled at each other across the meadows.

"Meanwhile the English governor at Halifax sent for the heads of the villages, the householders of Piziquid, Grand Pré, Annapolis. He said the time was come, the final time, and they must swear fealty to King George of England. He bade them choose between that oath, with peace, or a fate he did not name. A few, wise like Giles de Lamourie, took oath. The rest feared La Garne, trusted France, and accounted England an old woman. They refused, and went home.

"The siege went on, and many balls were wasted. The English were all on one side of the fort, so those of the garrison who got tired of being besieged walked out the other side and went home. These were the philosophers. Vergor lived in his bomb-proof casemate, and was at ease. But one morning while he sat at breakfast with other officers a shell came through the roof and killed certain of them.

"That ended it. If the bomb-proof was not

bomb-proof, Vergor might get hurt. He capitulated. His officers broke their swords, but in vain. La Garne spat upon him."

Here he stopped, his eyes veered, and his face twisted. In a strange voice he went on:

"In La Garne yet flickers one spark of good — his courage. Till that is eaten out by his sins he lives, not being fully ripe for the final hell."

He stopped again, moistening his lips with his tongue.

I put my hand to my head.

"Give me a drink of water, I pray you!" said I to divert him, fearing lest that swift and succinct narrative had come to an end.

He gave it to me, and in a moment began again.

"So Beauséjour fell," said he. "La Garne left early, for him the English wanted to hang. The rest marched out with honours of war. The English found them an inconvenience as prisoners, and sent them to Louisbourg. And Beauséjour is now Fort Cumberland."

"So fades the glory of France from Acadie — forever!" I murmured, weighed down with prescience.

"Just as it was fading," continued Grûl, with a hint of the cynic in his voice, "your cousin, Marc de Mer, came from Quebec with despatches. The garrison was marching out. He, being already out, judged it unnecessary to go in. He

took boat down Chignecto water, and up through Minas to Grand Pré. Here he busied himself with your uncle's affairs, laying aside his uniform and passing unmolested as a villager.

"For a little there was stillness. Then the great doom fell.

"To every settlement went English battalions. What I saw at Grand Pré is what others saw at Annapolis, Piziquid, Baie Verte. An English colonel, one Winslow, smooth and round and rosy of countenance, angry and anxious, little in love with his enterprise, summoned the men of Grand Pré to meet him in the chapel and hear the last orders of the king. There had been "last orders" before, and they had exploded harmlessly enough. The men of Grand Pré went — and your cousin Marc, having a restless curiosity, went with them. Thereupon the doors were shut. They were as rats in a trap, a ring of fire about them.

"They learned the king's decree clearly enough. They were to be put on ships, — they, their families, such household gear as there might be place for, — and carried very far from their native fields, and scattered among strangers of an alien speech and faith.

"Well, the mountains had fallen upon them. Who could move? They lay in the chapel, and their hearts sweat blood. Daily their weeping women,

their wide-eyed children, came bringing food. But the ships were not ready. The agony has dragged all summer. At last two small ship-loads are gone; the crowd is less in the chapel; some houses stand empty in the village, waiting to burn. The year grows old; the task is nearly done."

There was a dark silence.

"Has my cousin Marc gone yet?" I asked heavily.

"He waits and wastes in the chapel."

"And my almost-father, Father Fafard?"

"No," said Grûl, "his trouble is but for others. He has ever counselled men to keep their oaths. He has opposed a face of steel to Quebec intrigue. The English reverence him. He blesses those who are taken away. He comforts those who wait."

Of Yvonne I had no excuse for asking more. What more I would know I must go and learn. To go and learn I must get strong. To get strong I must sleep. I turned my face to the wall.

Chapter XXII

Grûl's Case

ON the following day, being alone all day, I walked out, shaking at first, but with a step growing rapidly assured. Not far from the cave I passed a clear pool, and saw my face amid the branches leaning over it. A pretty cavalier, I thought, to go a-wooing. A little further on I came to a secluded cabin, where a young woman bent over the wash-tub in the sunny doorway. I went up and saluted her courteously. The alarm died from her face, and compassion melted there instead.

"I have been long wounded, in the woods," I said. "Give me, I pray you, the charity of a cup of milk, and lend me your scissors and a glass."

At this the compassion ran away in laughter, and she cried merrily:

"Sit here on the stoop, monsieur, till I get them for you."

"Plainly," thought I, "you have not husband or brother in the chapel at Grand Pré!"

On her return she answered as it were straight to my thought.

"My man's in the woods!" she said, with pride. "And he's all safe. They didn't catch *him*."

"You may well thank God for that, madame!" said I gravely, drinking the milk with relish and setting myself assiduously to my toilet. My hair of course I could do little with,—I was no barber's apprentice. The long, straight, lustreless black locks hung down over my collar, framing lugubriously a face to scare hunger from a feast. But there was enough of it to be persuaded into covering the patches and scars.

My beard, however, proved interesting. With infinite pains I trimmed it to a courtly point, and decided it would pass muster. It was not unlike my uncle's — and the Sieur de Briart was ever, in my eyes, an example of all that was to be admired. The success of my efforts was attested by the woman's growing respect. She now recognized me for a gentleman, and brought me a dish of curds, and hustled with civilities till I went.

I arrived back at the cave in such good fettle that I felt another day would see me ripe for any venture. But I was tired, and slept so soundly that I knew not when my host came in.

In the morning he was there, getting ready a savory breakfast. When I proposed my enterprise for the day, he said, very wisely:

"If you think you're fit to-day, perhaps you may almost be so to-morrow. Wait. Don't bungle a great matter by a little haste!"

So I curbed my chafing eagerness, and waited. He rested at home all day, and we talked much. What was said, however, was for the most part not pertinent to this record. Only one short reach of the conversation lives in my memory — but that is etched with fire.

It came in this way. One question had led to another, till at last I asked.

"Why do *you* so hate La Garne?" and was abashed at my boldness in asking.

He sprang up and left the cave; and left me cursing my stupidity. It was an hour ere he came back, but he was calm, and seated himself as if nothing had happened.

"I had thought," said he, in an even voice, "that if I were to speak of that the walls of this cave would cry out upon me for vengeance delayed. But I have considered, and a little I will tell you. You must know; for the hour will come when you will help me in my vengeance, and you might weaken, for you do not comprehend the mad sweetness of hate. You are born for a great happiness or a great sorrow, and either destiny may make one blunt to hate."

"I was a poor gentleman of Blois, part fop, part fantastical scholar, a dabbler in magic, and a lover

of women. My nature pulled two ways. I was alone in the world, save for a little sister, beautiful, just come to womanhood, whom I loved as daughter and sister both. She thought me the wonderful among men. It chanced that at last I knew another love. A woman, the wife of a witless pantaloон of the neighbourhood, ensnared all my wits, till I saw life only in her eyes. Her husband came upon us in her garden — and for his reproaches I beat him cruelly. But he, though not a man, was not all fool. For loving his wife he could not punish me — I being stronger and more popular than he; but he knew that for their the law would hang a man. He hid a treasure of jewels, and with a nice cunning fixed the crime upon me. It was clear as daylight, so that almost myself believed myself guilty. In a foul, reeking cell in the city wall I awaited judgment and the penalty.

"A confession makes the work of the judges easier, and as I would not confess I was to be tortured — when the Court was ready; all in good time.

"At Blois was a young blade renowned no less for his conquests of women than for his ill-favoured face. His ugliness prevailed where the beauty of other men found virtue an impregnable wall against it. He courted my sister. She repulsed him. It got about and shamed him. Then (I this while in prison, and she helpless) he laid

a public wager with his fellows that he would have her innocence.

"He told her I was to be tortured. After a time he told her he could save me from that extremity. This thought worked for a time upon her lonely anguish. Then he swore he *would* save me—but at a price.

"At last the price was paid. He won his wager. On the day that I was tortured she killed herself before the judges. He, astonished, fled to Italy, hid in a monastery, and dedicated himself to the missions of the New World.

"The judges were, after all, men. They said the evidence against me was insufficient. They set me free, as an avenger.

"I have not been in haste. The man has grown more evil year by year; so I have waited. I will not send him to his account till the score is full. The deepest hell must be ready, and gape for him. Meanwhile, his soul has dwelt all these years alone with fear. He is a brave man, but he knows I wait—he knows not for what; and he sweats and is afraid!"

He told the story simply, quietly; but there was madness in his voice. The unspeakable thing choked me. I got up.

"It is enough!" said I. "I will not fail you when you need me."

But I went out into the air for a little.

Chapter XXIII

At Gaspereau Lower Ford

ON the following day, being Tuesday, November 16, 1855, and my twenty-seventh birthday, I went down to Grand Pré. I am thus precise about the date, for I felt as I set forth that the issues of life and death hung upon my going. Right here, it seemed to me, was a very knife-edge of a day, which should sever and allot to me for all the future my part of joy or ruin. Surely, thought I,—to justify my expectation of colossal events,—I have not lain these long months dead, that action, once more started, should dribble like a spent stream.

Therefore I went, like a careful strategist, equipped with all the knowledge Grûl could give. I had planned how to reach Father Fafard, and through him how to reach Yvonne. And as the day was to be a great one, I thought well it should be a long one. I set out upon the palest promise of daybreak.

My strength, under one compelling purpose, had

come back ; and it seemed to me that I saw events and their chances with radiating clearness. So up-strung were my nerves that the long tramp seemed over in a few minutes, and I found myself, almost with surprise, at the lower ford of the Gaspereau, just under the hill which backs Grand Pré. Here was the thick wood wherein I planned to lie perdu, in the event of dangerous passers. In a little while there came in view a woman, heavy-eyed and dishevelled, carrying a basket of new-baked barley bread, very sweet to smell. It was clear she was one with an interest in the prisoners at the chapel. In such a case I could have no fear of stumbling upon a traitor. I stepped out to her.

"Would that he, too," said I significantly, "had gone to the woods in time!"

Her eyes ran over with the ready and waiting tears ; but she jerked her apron jealously over the loaves, and looked at me with a touch of resentment, as if to say, "Why had you such foresight, and not he?"

"He went to hear the reading, and they took him," she moaned. "And who will keep the little ones from starving in the winter coming on?"

"It is where I, too, would be now — in the chapel prison yonder," said I gently. "But I lay in the woods, wounded, too sick to go to the reading, so I escaped."

The resentment faded out. She saw that I was

not one of those who shamed her husband's credulity. I might have been caught too, had I been given the same chance.

"For the little ones, I pray you accept this silver, and count it a loan to your husband in his prison," said I, slipping two broad Spanish pieces into her hand.

She looked grateful and astonished, but had no words ready.

"And do, I beg of you, a kindness to one in bitter need of it," I went on. "You know Father Fafard?"

Her face lightened with love.

"He grieves for me, thinking me dead," said I. "Tell him, I beg of you, that one who loves him waits to see him in the wood by the lower ford."

Her face clouded with suspicion.

"How shall I know — how shall he know — you are honest?" she asked.

I was troubled.

"*You* must judge by your woman's wit," said I. "And he will come. He fears no one. But no, tell him Paul Grande waits at the lower ford."

"The traitor!" she blazed out; and, recoiling, hurled the money in my face. It stung strangely.

"You are wrong," said I, in a low voice. "But as you will. Tell him, if you will, that Paul Grande, the traitor, waits for him at the lower ford. But if you do not tell him, be sure *he* will not soon

forgive you. And for the money, he shall keep it for your children — and you will be sorry to have unjustly accused me."

She laughed with bitter mockery, and turned away.

"But I will tell him; that can do no harm," she said. "I'll tell him the traitor who loves him waits at the ford."

I withdrew into the wood, beyond all reason pained at the injustice.

The unpleasant peasant woman was as good as her word, however; for in little more than the space of an hour I saw Father Fafard approaching. Plainly he had come hot upon the instant.

"My dear, dear boy! Where have you been, and what suffered?" he cried, catching me hard by the two arms, and looking into my eyes.

"It was Grûl saved me," said I.

Beyond earshot, deep in the wood, where no wind hindered the noon sun from warming a little open glade, I told my story briefly.

"Paul," said he, when I had finished, "my heart has now the first happiness it has known through all these dreadful months. But you must slip out of this doomed country without an hour's delay. Quebec, of course! And then, when an end is made here, I will join you. Have you money for the journey?"

I laughed softly.

"My plans are not quite formed. I must see Yvonne. Will you fetch her to me?"

He rose in anger—a little forced, I thought.

"No!" said he.

"Then, I beseech you, give her a message from me, that I may see her for a little this very day."

"Paul," he cried passionately, "it is a sin to talk of it. She has pledged her troth. She is at peace. I will not have her disturbed."

"Does she love him?" I asked.

"I—I suppose so. Or she will, doubtless," he stammered.

"Oh, doubtless!" said I. "And meanwhile, does she show readiness to carry out her promise? Does she listen kindly to her impatient lover—her anxious father?"

"The Englishman has displeased her, for a time," said he, "but that will pass. She knows the duty of obedience; she respects the plighted word. There can be but one ending; though you may succeed in making her very unhappy—for a time."

"I will make her very happy," I said quietly, "so long as time endures for her and me."

He flashed round upon me with sharp scorn.

"What can *you* do for her? You, hiding for your life, the ruined upholder of a lost cause! Here she is safe, protected, wealth and security before her. And with you?"

"*Life, I think!*" said I, rising too, and stretching out my arms. "But listen, father," I went on more lightly. "I am not so helpless. I have some little *rentes* in Montreal, you know. And moreover, I am not planning to carry her off to-night. By no means anything so finely irregular. I am not ready. Only, see her I will before I go. If you will not help me, I will stay about this place, about your house indeed, till I meet her. That is all. If you dote upon my going, you know the way to speed me."

His kind, round face puckered anxiously. But he hit upon a compromise.

"I will have no hand in it," said he. "But if you are resolved to stay, you may as well find her without loss of time. The house we occupy is crowded, and she affects a solitary mood. She walks over the hill and down this way, of an evening, to visit some unhappy ones along by the river. You may see her, perhaps, to-night."

I grasped his hand and kissed it, but he drew it away, vexed at himself.

"We will talk of other things now," I said softly. "But do not be angry if I say I love you, father."

He smiled with an air of reproach; and thereafter talk we did through hours, save for a little time when he was absent fetching me a meal. All that Grûl had told me of the ruin of the French cause he told me in another colour, and more

besides of the doom of the Acadians — but upon Yvonne's name we touched no more by so much as the lightest breath.

At my cousin Marc's rashness in going to the chapel he glanced with some severity, grieving for the sorrow of the young wife at Quebec. But for the English he had many good words — they were pitiful, he said, in the act of carrying out cruel orders. And they neither robbed nor terrorized. Not they, said he, but a wicked priest and the intriguers of a rotten government at Quebec, were the scourge of Acadie.

When the sun got low over the Gaspereau Ridge he called to mind some duties too long forgotten, and bade me farewell with a loving wistfulness. I think, however, it was the imminent coming of Yvonne that drove him away. He feared lest he should meet her, and in seeming to know of my purpose seem to sanction it. I could not help believing in my heart that in this matter, perhaps for the first time in his priesthood, the kind curé's conscience was a little tremulous in its admonitions.

I watched him out of sight; and then, posting myself in a coign of vantage behind a great willow that overhung the stream, I waited with a thumping heart, and with a misgiving that all other organs within my frame had slumped away to nothing but a meagre and contemptible jelly.

Chapter XXIV

"If You Love Me, Leave Me"

TILL the flames of amber and copper along the Gaspereau Ridge had temperately diminished to a lucidity of pale violet, I waited and watched. Then all at once the commotion in my bosom came to an icy stop.

A light, white form descended from the ridge to the ford. I needed not the black lace shawl about the head and shoulders to tell me it was she, before a feature or a line could be distinguished. The blood at every tingling finger-tip thrilled the announcement of her coming.

I grasped desperately at all I had planned to say — now slipping from me. I felt that she was intrenched in a fixed resolve; and I felt that not my life alone, — ready to become a very small matter, — but hers, her true life, depended upon my breaking that resolve. Yet how was I to conquer her, I who at sight of her was at her feet? I knew — with that inner knowledge by which I know God is — that she, the whitest of women, intended un-

wittingly a sin against her body in wedding a man unloved — that she, in my eyes the wisest, most clear-visioned of women, contemplated a folly beyond words. But how could I so far escape my reverence for her as to convict her of this folly and this sin?

But now all my thoughts, words, pleas, sprayed into air. She came — and I stepped into her path, whispering :

"Yvonne!"

She was almost within reach of my hand, had I stretched it out, — but I dared not touch her. She gave the faintest cry. Taken at so sudden a disadvantage, she had not time to mask herself, and her great eyes told for one heart-beat what I knew her lips would have denied. Her fingers locked and unlocked where they caught the black mantilla across her bosom. She stood for an instant motionless; then glanced back up the hill with a desperate fear.

"They will see you!" she half sobbed. "You will be caught and thrown into prison. Oh, hide yourself, hide at once!"

"Not without you," I interrupted.

"Then with me!" she cried pantingly, and led the way, almost running, back of the willow, down a thread of a path, to a hidden place behind a bend of the stream. Glancing back at the last moment, I saw a squad of soldiers coming over the hill.

As soon as she felt that I was safely out of sight and earshot, she turned and faced me with a sudden swift anger.

"Why have you done this? Why have you forced me to this?" she cried.

"Because I love you," said I slowly. "Because"—

She drew herself up.

"You do not know," said she, "what I have promised to Monsieur Anderson. I have promised to redeem my word to him when he can show you to me safe and well."

I laughed with sheer joy.

"He shall wait long then," said I. "Sooner than he should claim the guerdon I will fall upon my sword, though my will is, rather, to live for you, beloved."

"Had the soldiers seen you and taken you," said she, in her eagerness forgetting her disguise, "he would have been able to claim me to-morrow. They may yet take you. Oh, go, go at once!"

"They shall not take me. Now that I know you love me, Yvonne,—for you have betrayed it,—my life is, next to yours, the most precious thing to me in the world. I go at once to Quebec to settle my affairs and prepare a home for you. Then I will come,—it will be but in a month or two, when this trouble is overpast,—and I will take you away."

Her face, all her form, drooped with a sort of weariness, as if her will had been too long taxed.

"You will find me the wife of George Anderson," she said faintly.

It was as if I had been struck upon the temples. My mouth opened, and shut again without words. First rage, then amazement, then despair, ran through me in hot surges.

"But — your promise — not till he could show me to you," I managed to stammer.

"I gave it in good faith," she said simply. "I can no longer hold him off by it, for I have seen you safe and well."

"I am *not* safe, as you may soon see," said I fiercely, "and not long shall I be well, as you will learn." Then, perceiving that this was a sorry kind of threat, and little manly, I made haste to amend it.

"No, no," I cried, "forget that! But stick to the letter of your promises, I beseech you. Why push to go back of that? Unless," I added, with bitterness, "you want the excuse!"

She shuddered, and forgot to resent the brutality.

"Go!" she pleaded. "Save yourself — for my sake — Paul!" And her voice broke.

"That you may wed with the clearer conscience!" I went on, merciless in my pain.

She crouched down, a drear and pitiful figure, on the slope of sod, and wept silently, her hands

over her eyes. I looked at her helplessly. I wanted to throw myself at her feet. Then the right thing seemed that I should gather her up into my arms — but I dared not touch her. At last I said, doubtfully:

“But — you love me ! ”

No answer.

“ You do love me, Yvonne? ”

She lifted her face, and with a childish bravery dashed off the tears, first with one hand, then the other. She looked me straight in the eyes.

“ I do *not*, ” said she, daring the lie. “ But you — you disturb me ! ”

This astonishing remark did not shake my confidence, but it threw me out of my argument. I shifted ground.

“ You do *not* love him ! ” I exclaimed, lamely enough.

“ I respect him ! ” said she, cool now, and controlling the situation. I felt that I had lost my one moment of advantage — the moment when I should have taken her into my arms. Not timidity, but reverence, had balked me. My heart turned, as it were, in my breast, with a hot, dumb fury — at myself.

“ The respect that cannot breed love for a lover will soon breed contempt, ” said I, holding myself hard to mere reasoning.

She ignored this idle answer. She arose and came close up to me.

"Paul," she said, scarcely above a whisper, "*will you save yourself for my sake?* If I say — if I say that I do love you a little — that if it *could* have been different — been you — I should have been — oh, glad, glad! — then will you go, for my sake?"

"No, no indeed!" shouted the heart within me at this confession. But with hope came cunning. I temporized.

"And if I go, for your sake," I asked, "when do you propose to become the wife of the Englishman?"

"Not for a long time, I will promise you," said she earnestly. "Not for a year — no, not for two years, if you like. Oh," — with a catch in her voice, — "not till I can feel differently about you, Paul!" And she hung her head at the admission.

"Dear," I said, "most dear and wonderful, can you not even now see how monstrous it would be if I should seem, for a moment, to relinquish you to another? Soul and body must tell you you are mine, as I am yours. But your eyes are shut. You are a maid, and you do not realize what it is that I would save you from. It is your **very whiteness blinds you**, so that you do not see the intolerableness of what they would thrust upon

you. For you it would be a sin. You do not see it — but you would see it, awaking to the truth when it was too late. From the horror of that awakening I must save you. I must" —

But she did not see; though her brain must have comprehended, her body did not; and therefore there could be no real comprehension of a matter so vital. She brushed aside my passionate argument, and came close up to me.

"Paul, dear," she said, "I think I know the beauty of sacrifice. I am sure I know what is right. You cannot shake me. I know what must be in the end. But if you will go and save yourself, I promise that the end shall be far off — so that he may grow angry, and perhaps even set me free, as I have almost asked him to do. But now this is good-by, dear. You shall go. You will not disobey me. But you may say good-by to me. And as once you kissed my feet (they have been proud ever since), so — though it is a sin, I know — you may kiss my lips, just once, — and go."

How little she knew what she was doing! Even as she spoke she was in my arms. The next moment she was trembling violently, and then she strove to tear herself away. But I was inexorable, and folded her close for yet an instant longer, till she was still. I raised my head and pushed her a little away, holding her by both arms that I might see her face.

"Oh," she gasped, "you are cruel! I did not mean that you should kiss me so—so hard."

"My—wife!" I whispered irrelevantly.

"Let me go, sir," she said, with her old imperious air, trying to remove herself from my grasp upon her arms. But I did not think it necessary to obey her. Then her face saddened in a way that made me afraid.

"You have done wrong, Paul," she said heavily. "I meant you should just touch me and go. You took unmanly advantage. Alas! I fear I have a bad heart. I cannot be so angry as I ought. But I am resolved. You know, now, that I love you; that no other can ever have my *love*. But that knowledge is the end of all between us, even of the friendship which might, one day, have comforted me. Go, I command you, if you would not have me an unhappy woman forever!"

She wrenched herself free. Then, seeing me, as she thought, hesitate for an answer, she added firmly:

"I love you! But I love honour more, and obedience to the right, and my plighted word. Go!"

"I will *not* go, my beloved, till you swear to tell the Englishman to-morrow that you love me and intend to be my wife."

"Listen," she said. "If you do not go at once, I promise you that I will be George Anderson's wife to-morrow."



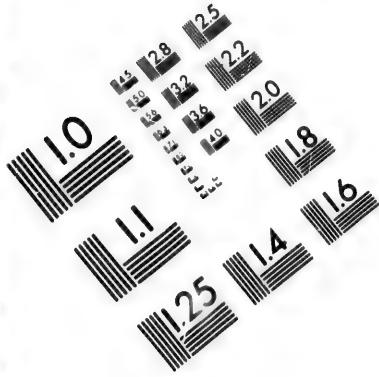
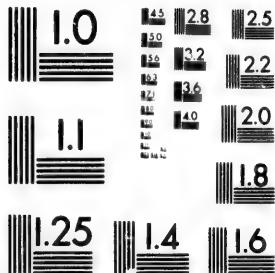
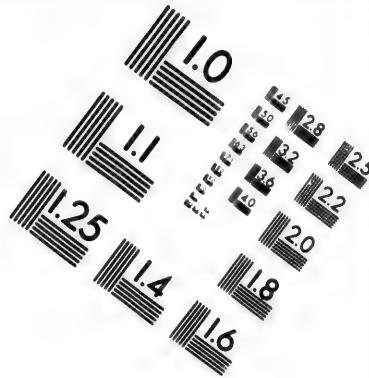
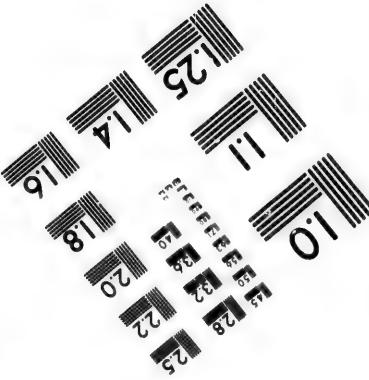
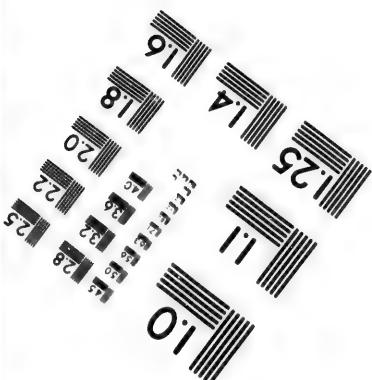


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I stared at her dumbly. Was it conceivable that she should mean such madness? Her eyes were fathomlessly sorrowful, her mouth was set. How was I to decide?

But fortune elected to save me the decision. A sharp voice came from the bank above —

“I arrest you, in the king’s name!”

We glanced up. There stood a squad of red-coats, a spruce young officer at their head.

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Chapter XXV

Over Gaspereau Ridge

MONSIEUR WALDRON!" cried Yvonne faintly.

" You here, Mademoiselle de Lamourie!" he exclaimed, with a surprise that his courtesy could not quite conceal.

" This, monsieur," she said, in a brave confusion, " is my friend, here for a moment because of my foolish desire to see him. I beg you"—

But he interrupted, reluctantly enough:

" It hurts me, mademoiselle, to have to say that your friend is my prisoner. If I were free to please you, he should go free."

The case was clearly beyond mending, so I would not condescend to evasion.

" I can do nothing but surrender, monsieur," said I civilly, " under the conclusive arbitrament of your muskets. Here is my sword." He took it, and I went on :

" I am Captain Paul Grande, of the French army in Canada."

His face changed.

"A spy, then!" he said harshly.

"You insult with impunity," I began. "An unarmed"—

But Yvonne broke in, her eyes flaming:

"How dare you, sir, insult *me*? That is not to be done with impunity, I think."

The man looked puzzled. Then his face cleared somewhat.

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle," he said slowly, looking from her face to mine. "I begin to understand a little, I think. There *is* a very sufficient reason why a French officer might appear in an enemy's country without his uniform — that country being Grand Pré — and yet be no spy!"

"I give you my word of honour," said I, "that I am no spy, but merely your prisoner. And if brought to trial I will prove what I say."

"I beg *your* pardon also — provisionally," he replied, with a pleasant air. "I am the last to believe a gentleman a spy, and I am confident you will clear yourself of the unavoidable charge. You are a soldier. You must see it to be unavoidable," he added.

"I do, monsieur," said I sorrowfully. "I have lain for months, wounded and delirious, in a hiding-place not far off, nursed by a faithful friend. Having just recovered, I came here for a fare-

well to dear friends; and you have arrived inopportunely, monsieur."

There was the bitterness of final despair beneath the lightness which I assumed.

"Your action seems to me very pardonable, I assure you," said he. "But I am not the judge. We must go." And he motioned his men to me.

But Yvonne came close to my side and laid her hand lightly on my arm.

"It is my wish, Monsieur Waldron," she said, "that Captain Grande should escort me, with your assistance, and that of your guard also, if you will!"

"Why, certainly, mademoiselle, it shall be as you wish," he said, with a ghost of a smile, which set her blushing wildly. "I have Captain Grande's sword and his"—

"And my word," said I, bowing.

"And his parole," he continued. "I need in no way constrain him till we reach the—the chapel. I will lead my men a little in the rear, and strive not to interrupt your conversation."

"I can never thank you enough for your courtesy, monsieur," said I.

So it came that a strange procession marched up the Gaspereau Ridge, through the bleak twilight. And the hilltop drew swiftly near—and my last few minutes sped—and I was dumb. Still, she was at my side. And perhaps my silence spoke.

But when we crossed the ridge, and the chapel prison appeared, and Yvonne's house some way apart, my tongue found speech,—but not argument, only wild entreaties, adorations, words that made her body tremble, though not, alas! her will.

At length she stopped.

"You must go back to them now, Paul. I will go on alone. Good-by, dear!"

"But we are not near the house," I stammered.

"Monsieur Anderson may come out to meet me. If he sees you now, before I change my conditions, how shall I escape the instant fulfilment of my promise?"

"But I am not safe, surely," I argued.

"His testimony can at once make you safe," said she.

My heart dropped, feeling the truth of her words. I could say nothing that I had not already said. Feeling impotent, feeling that utter defeat had been hurled upon me in the very moment of triumph, my brain seemed to stop working.

"What will you do?" was all that came through my dry lips.

She had grown much older in the last hour.

"I will wait, Paul, as I promised you," she said sadly; "one year—no, two years—before I redeem my pledge and become his wife. That is all I can do—and that I *can* do. I choose to believe that you would have obeyed me and gone

away at once, if we had not been interrupted. Therefore I keep my promise to you. It was not your fault that you were not permitted to obey me."

I was quite at the end of my tether, though my resolution rose again to full stature on learning that I should have time — time to plan anew. She held out her hand. "Good-by, and God keep you, my dear friend!" said she very softly.

I looked around. The squad had halted nearby. Some were looking, curse them! But that most decent officer had his back turned, and was intently scanning the weather. I lifted her hand to my lips.

"My — wife!" I muttered, unsaftelessly obstinate.

"No!" she said sadly. "Only your friend. Oh, leave me that!"

And she was gone, a Psyche glimmering away through the dark which strove to cling to her.

I stood for a moment, eyes and heart straining after her. Then I turned as the guard came up.

"At your service, monsieur," said I.

Chapter XXVI

The Chapel Prison

BEFORE the door of the chapel stood a bent old figure hooded in a red shawl. Muttering, and with bowed head, it poked in the dust with a staff. When we were close at hand it straightened alertly; and old Mother Pêche's startling eyes flashed into mine. I could have kissed the strange hawk face, so glad was I to see it. And I held out my hand, to be clutched eagerly.

"My blessings be upon thee, *chéri* Master Paul!" she cried.

"Thank you, mother!" said I. "Your love is very dear to me; and for your blessings, I need them all."

"Come, monsieur," said Waldron, at the steps.

"A word, a word," she begged, half of him, half of me, "before thou go in there and these old eyes, perhaps, see thee never again."

"Grant me one moment, I beg you, monsieur," said I earnestly to Waldron. "She is a dear old friend and retainer of my family."

He nodded, and turned half aside in patient indifference.

"Listen," she whispered, thrusting her face near mine, and talking rapidly, that the guard, who were but clumsy with our French speech, might not understand. "Hast thou the stone safe?"

"Surely," said I.

"Then here, take this," she muttered, laying a silken tress of hair in my hand. In the dusk I could not note its colour; but I needed not light to tell me whose it was. My blood ran hot and cold beneath it. The pulse throbbed furiously in my fingers as they closed upon it. "I clipped it under the new moon, the right moon, with my own hand, for thee, Master Paul."

"Did she know it was for me?" I asked, in a sort of ecstasy.

"No, no!" answered the old dame impatiently; "but she gave it to me—laughing because I wanted it. I said that I was going far away with these my people,"—sweeping her hand toward the village,—"while she, perhaps, would stay. Strangely she regarded that *perhaps*, Master Paul. But here it is—and I have put a spell upon it while waiting for thee to come; and it will draw, it will draw her; she cannot let it go very far off, as long as she lives. It is for thee, chéri, I did it."

Now, how I loved her for it, even while deriding

the magic, I need not tell. Yet I was angry with her for explaining. That made me seem to take a base advantage in retaining the treasure. Sorrowfully I said:

"I cannot keep it, mother. That were treason to her. I will have naught of her but what her own heart gives me."

And I held out the precious lock to her again, yet all the time grasped it tightly enough, no doubt.

"Why, *chéri*," she laughed cunningly, "where is the treason? *You* don't believe an old wife's foolish charms!"

"True, mother," I acquiesced at once, relieved beyond measure, "true, there can be no witchcraft in it but that which ever resides in every hair of that dear head. Not her, alas! but me, me it ensnares. God bless you, mother, for this wonderful gift."

"Be of good cheer, Master Paul," she said, hobbling briskly off. "I will bring thee some word often to the wicket."

"I am ready now for the inside of these walls, monsieur," said I, turning to Waldron, with a warm elation at my heart. The hair I had coiled and slipped into the little deerskin pouch wherein the eye of Manitou slumbered.

A moment more and I had stepped inside the prison. The closing and locking of the door

seemed to me unnecessarily loud, blatantly conspicuous.

At once I heard greetings, my name spoken on all sides, heartily, respectfully, familiarly, as might be, for I had both friends and followers—many, alas! —in that dolorous company. To them, worn with the sameness of day upon monotonous day, my coming was an event. But for a little I chose to heed no one. There was time, I thought, ahead of us, more than we should know what to do with. As I could not possibly speak to all at once, I spoke to none. I leaned against a wooden pillar, looked at the windows, then the altar-place, of the sacred building which hived for me so many humming memories of childhood—memories rich with sweetness, sharp with sting. The place looked battered, begrimed, desecrated, —yet a haunting of my mother's gentle eyes still hallowed it. To see them the better I covered my own eyes with my hand.

"It must be something of a sorer stroke than merely to be clapped in prison, to make my captain so downcast," I heard a cheerful voice declare close at my elbow.

"Why, and that it is, you may be sure, my brave ferryman!" said I, looking up with a smile and grasping the long, gaunt fingers of yellow Ba'tiste Chouan. "I have my own reasons for not wanting to be in Grand Pré chapel this day,

for all that it is especially the place where I can see most of my friends."

Straightway, my mood changing, I moved swiftly hither and thither, calling them by name. There was the whole clan of the Le Marchands, black, fearless, melancholy for their flax-fields ; the three Le Boutilliers ; the brave young slip, Jacques Violet, whom I had liked as a boy ; a Landry or two ; the lad Petit Joliet ; several of the restless Labillois ; long Philibert Trou, the moose-hunter ; and, to my regretful astonishment, that wily fox, La Mouche.

"*You* here, too!" I cried, shaking him by the arm. "If they have caught you, who has escaped!"

"I came in on business, my captain," said he grimly.

"A woman back of it, monsieur," grunted Philibert, indifferent to La Mouche's withering eye-stroke.

Naturally, I did not smile. I met his brooding, deep eyes with a look which told him much. I might, indeed, have even spoken a word of comprehension ; but just then I caught sight of my cousin Marc coming from the sacristy. I hastened to greet him with hand and heart.

There was so much to talk of between us two that others, understanding, left us to ourselves. He told me of his little Puritan's grief, far away in Quebec, of her long suspense, and of how, at last,

I had got word to her. "She is a woman among ten thousand, Paul," said he. "These New Englanders are the people to breed up a wife for a French gentleman."

I assented most heartily, for I had ever liked and admired that white-skinned Prudence of his. Of my own affairs I told him some things fully, some things not at all; of my accident, my illness, my sojourning with Grûl, everything; but of my coming to the Gaspereau ford and my capture, nothing then.

"There is too much hanging upon it, Marc," said I. "It touches me too deeply. I cannot talk of it at all while we are like to be interrupted. Let us wait for quiet—when the rest are asleep."

"It is cold here at night," said Marc, "but the women have been allowed to bring us a few quilts and blankets. You wills have mine—the gift of the good curé. Then we can talk."

The early autumnal dark had been feebly lighted this while by a few candles; but candles were getting scarce in the stricken cottages of Grand Pré, and in Grand Pré chapel prison they were a hoarded luxury. The words "lights out" came early; and Marc and I laid ourselves in a corner of the sacristy by general consent reserved to him.

A cold glimmer of stars came in by the narrow window, and I thought of them looking down on

Yvonne, awake, not sleeping, I well knew. Were the astrologers right, I wondered. Good men and great had believed in the jurisdiction of the stars. I remembered a very learned astrologer in Paris, during the year I spent there, and futilely I wished I had consulted him. But at the time I had been so occupied with the present as to make small question of the future.

Soon the sound of many breathings told that the prisoners were forgetting for a little their bars and walls. In a whisper, slowly, I told Marc of my coming to Grand Pré in the spring — of Yvonne's bond to the Englishman — of the conversation at the hammock — of the fire, the scene at the boat, the saving of Anderson — and of all that had just been said and done at the ford of the Gaspereau.

He heard me through, in such silence that my heart sank, fearing he, too, was against me; and I passionately craved his support. I knew the lack of it would no jot alter my purpose; but I loved him, and hungered for the warmth of the comrade heart.

When he spoke, however, my fears straight fell dead.

"Only let us get safe out of this coil, Paul, and we will let my Prudence take the obstinate maid in hand," said lie, with an air that proclaimed all confidence in the result. "You must remember, dear old boy, the inevitable fetish which our

French maids are wont to make out of obedience to parents — a fair and worshipful virtue, indeed, that obedience, but not one to exact the sacrifice of a woman's life — and of what is yet more sacred to her. Prudence will make her understand some things that you could not."

I felt for his hand and gripped it.

"You think I will win her?" I whispered.
"And you will stand by me?"

"For the latter question, how can you ask it?" he answered, with a hint of reproach in his voice. "I fear I should stand by you in the wrong, Paul, let alone when, as now, I count you much in the right. I have but to think of Prudence in like case, you see. For the former question — why, see, you have time and her own heart on your side. She may be obstinate in that blindness of hers; and you may make blunders with your ancient facility, cousin mine. But I call to mind that trick you ever had of holding on — the trick of the English bulldog which you used so to admire. It is a strange streak, that, in a star-worshipping, sonnet-writing, wonder-wise freak like you, and makes me often doubt whether your verses, much as I like them, can be poetry, after all. But it is a useful characteristic to have about you, and, to my mind, it means you'll win."

"If the English don't hang me for a spy," said I.

"Stuff!" grunted my cousin. "The maid will look to that."

Such was my confidence in my cousin Marc's discernment that I went to sleep somewhat comforted.

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Chapter XXVII

Dead Days and Withered Dreams

BUT to me awaking in the raw of the morning, a prisoner, the comfort seemed less sure. All through the weary, soul-sapping weeks that followed, it paled and shrank, till nothing was left of it but a hopeless sort of obstinacy, so rooted in the central fibre-knots of my being that to the very teeth of fate my pulses still kept beating out the vow, "*I will win! I will win!*"

For cheer, all my cousin's sober and well-considered confidence could not keep that in my heart. Of Yvonne, I could get not one word directly. I saw her hand in the fact that nothing more was heard of the charge of "spy" against me. Yet this benefit had a bitterness in it, for I knew she must have done it through Anderson. Intolerably did that knowledge grate.

Mother Pêche came daily to the wicket, but could never boast a message for my ear—and in this reticence of Yvonne's I saw a hardness of resolve which made my heart sink. Father Fafard,

too, came daily with food for me, and with many a little loving kindness; but of Yvonne he would not speak. Marc, one day, encountered him on the subject, but prevailed not at all, in so much that they two parted in some heat.

At last from Mother Pêche came word that my dear maid was ill, obscurely ailing, pale-lipped, and with no more of the fathomless light in her great eyes. The reassurance that this gave me on the score of her love was beyond measure overbalanced by the new fear that it bred and nourished. Would not the strain become too great for her — so great that either her promise to wait would break down, or else her health? Here was a dilemma, and upon one or the other of the horns of it I writhed hourly. It cost little to feed me, those weeks in the Grand Pré chapel prison.

Meanwhile, it is but just to our English jailers — they were men of New England chiefly, from Boston, Plymouth, Salem, and that vicinage — to record it of them that they were kind and little loved their employment. They held the doom of banishment to be just, but they deplored the inescapable harshness of it. As I came to learn, it was for New England's sake chiefly, and at her instance, that old England had ordained the great expulsion. Boston would not trust the Acadians, and vowed she could no longer endure a wasp's nest at her door. Thus it was that the

decree had at last gone forth; and even I could not quite deny the justice of it. I knew that patient forbearance had long been tried in vain; and I bethought me, too, of the great Louis' once plan, to banish and utterly purge away all the English of New England and New York.

Of affairs and public policy in the world outside our walls I learned from Lieutenant Waldron, who came in often among us and made me his debtor by many kindly courtesies. He had an interest in me from the first—in the beginning, as I felt, an interest merely of curiosity, for he doubtless wondered that Mademoiselle de Lamourie should stoop to be entangled with two lovers. But soon he conceived a friendship for me, which I heartily reciprocated. I have ever loved the English as a brave and worthy enemy; and this young officer from Plymouth town presented to my admiration a fair epitome of the qualities I most liked in his race. In appearance he was not unlike Anderson, but of slimmer build, with the air of the fighter added, and a something besides which I felt, but could not name. This something Anderson lacked—and the lack was subtly conspicuous in a character which even my jealous rivalry was forced to call worthy of love.

The reservation in my own mind I found to lie in Waldron's also, and with even more consequence attached to it. Anderson having chanced

to be one day the subject of our conversation, I let slip hint of the way it galled me to feel myself in his debt for exemption from the charge of spying.

"I can easily understand," said he, "that you feel it intolerable. I am surprised, more and more daily, at Mademoiselle de Lamourie's acceptance of his suit. Oh, you French,—may I say it, monsieur?—what a merchandise you make of your young girls!"

"You put it unpleasantly, sir," said I; "but too truly for me to resent it. You surprise me, however, in what you imply of Anderson. I liked him heartily at first sight. I know him to be brave, though he does not carry arms. He is capable and clear-sighted, kind and frank; and surely he has beauty to delight a woman's eyes. I am in despair when I think of him."

"He is all you say," acknowledged Waldron, with a shrewd twinkle in his sharp blue eyes; "nevertheless there is something he is not, which damns him for me. I don't *quite* like him, and that's a fact. At the same time I know he's a fine fellow, and I ought to like him. I don't mind telling you, for your discomfort, that he has done all that man could do to get you out of this place. He has been to Halifax about it, and dared to make himself very disagreeable to the governor when he was refused. It is not his fault you are not out and off by this time."

"Thank God, he failed!" said I, with fervour.

"So should I say in your case, monsieur," he replied, with a kind of dry goodwill.

To this obliging officer — in more kindly after-years, I am proud to say, destined to become my close friend — I owed some flattering messages from Madame de Lamourie. I knew she liked me — had ever liked me, save during those days of my ignominious eclipse when I seemed to all Grand Pré an accomplice of the Black Abbé and Vaurin. I had a suspicion that she would not be deeply displeased should I, by any hook or crook, accomplish the discomfiture of Anderson. But I well knew her friendliness to me would not go so far as open championship. She would obey her husband, for peace' sake; and take her satisfaction in a little more delicate malice. I pictured her as making the handsome English Quaker subtly miserable by times.

From Giles de Lamourie, however, I received no greeting. I took it that he regarded me as a menace not only to his own authority, but to his daughter's peace. A prudent marriage, — a regular, well-ordered, decently arranged for marriage, — in such he fancied happiness for Yvonne. But I concerned me not at all for opposition of his. I thought that Yvonne, if ever she should choose, could bring him to her feet.

At last there came a break in the monotony of

the days — a break which, for all its bitterness, was welcomed. Word came that another ship was tardily ready for its freight of exiles. The weary faces of the guard brightened, for here was evidence that something was being done. Within the chapel rose a hum of expectation, and all speculated on their chances. For if exile was to be, "Let it come quickly" was the cry of all.

But no — not of all. I feared it, with a physical fear till then unknown to me. To me it meant a new and appalling barrier. Here but two wooden walls and a stone's throw of wintry space fenced me from her bodily presence. But after exile, how many seas, and vicissitudes, and uncomprehending alien faces!

But I was not to go this time; nor yet my cousin Marc, who, having at last received from Quebec authentic word of the health and safety of his Puritan, was looking out upon events with his old enviable calm.

On the day when a stir in the cottages betokened that embarkation was to begin, the south windows of the chapel were in demand. They afforded a clear view of the village and a partial view of the landing-place. Benches were piled before them, and we took turns by the half hour in looking out, those at the post of observation passing messages back to the eager rows behind. It was plain at once that the cottages at the west end of the

village were to be cleared in a block. On a sudden there was a sharp outcry from the three Le Boutiliers, as they saw their homely house-gear being carried from their doorways and heaped upon a lumbering hay-wagon. They were of a nervous stock, and forthwith began a great lamentation, thinking that their wives and families were to be sent away without them. When the little procession started down the street toward the landing — the old grandmother and the two littlest children perched on the wagon-load, the wives and other children walking beside in attitudes that proclaimed their tears — the good fellows became so excited as to trouble our company.

"Chut, men!" cried Marc, in a tone of sharp command. "Are you become women all at once? There will be no separation of families this time, when there is but one ship and no room for mistakes. The guards yonder will be calling for you presently, never fear."

This quieted them; for my cousin had a convincing way with him, and they accounted his wisdom something beyond natural.

Then there came by two more wagons, and another sorrowful procession, appearing from the direction of the Habitants; and the word "Le Marchands" went muttering through the prison. Le Marchand settlement was moving to the ship — and even now a cloud of black smoke, with red

tongues visible on the morning air, showed us what would befall the houses of Grand Pré when the folk of Grand Pré should be gone.

The Le Marchand men made no sign, save to glower under their brows and grip the window sashes with tense fingers. They were of different stuff from the Le Boutilliers, these black Le Marchands. They set their teeth hard, and waited.

So it went on through the morning, one man after another seeing his family led away to the ship — his family and some scant portion of his goods; and thus we came to know what men among us were like to be called forth on this voyage.

Presently the big door was thrown open, and all faces flashed about to the new interest. Outside stood a double red line of English soldiers. An officer — the round-faced Colonel Winslow himself — stepped in, a scroll of paper curling in his hand. In a precise and something pompous voice he read aloud the names of those to go. The Le Marchands were first on the roll; then the Le Boutilliers, Ba'tiste Chouan, Jean and Tamin Masson, and a long list that promised to thin our crowded benches by one-third. But I was left among the unsummoned; and my cousin Marc, and long Philibert Trou, and the wily fox La Mouche; and I saw Marc's lips compress with

a significant satisfaction when he saw these two remaining. Vaguely I thought — “He has a plan!” But thereafter, in my gloom, I thought no more of it.

So these chosen ones marched off between their guards; and that afternoon the ship went out on the ebb tide with a wind that carried her, white-sailed, around the dark point of Blomidon. Grand Pré chapel prison settled apathetically back to a deeper calm.

Chapter XXVIII

The Ships of her Exile

THE days dragged till December was setting his hoar face toward death, and still delayed the last ships. The jailers grew sour-visaged. From Yvonne came no more word, only the tidings that she was not well, and that her people were troubled for her. Father Fafard's cheery wrinkles at mouth and eyes deepened from cheer to care; but still his lips locked over the name of Yvonne.

My hope sank ever lower and lower. That old wound in my head, cured by Grûl's searching simples, began to harass me afresh — whether from cold, the chapel being but barn-like, or from the circumstance that my heart, ceaselessly gnawing upon itself, gnawed also upon every tissue and nerve. I came strangely close to the ranger La Mouche in those bad days; for though I knew not, nor cared nor dared to ask, his story, I saw in his eyes a something which he, too, doubtless saw in mine. So it came that we sat much

together, in a black silence. It was not that I loved less than of old my true comrade Marc, but the fact that he possessed where he loved, and could with blissful confidence look forward, set him some way apart from me. Upon La Mouche, with the deep hurt sullen in his eyes, I could look and mutter to myself:

"Old, wily fox, is your foot, once so free,
caught in the snare of a woman?"

So tortuous a thing in its workings is this red clot of a human heart that I got a kind of perverted solace out of such thoughts as these.

At last the tired watchers at our south windows announced two ship in the basin. They came up on the flood, and dropped anchor off the Gaspe-reau mouth.

"This ends it," I heard Marc say coolly. "All that's left of Grand Pré can go in those two ships."

To me the words came as a knell for the burial of my last hope.

The embarkation had now to be pushed with a speed which wrought infinite confusion, for the weather had turned bitter, and it was not possible for women and children to long endure the cold of their dismantled homes. The big wagons, watched by us from our windows, went creaking and rattling down the frozen roads. Wailing women, frightened and wondering children, beds, chests, many-colored quilts, bright red and green chairs,

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— to us it looked as if all these were tumbled into a narrowing vortex and swept with a piteous indiscriminacy into one ship or the other. The orderly method with which the previous embarkings had been managed was now all thrown to the winds by the fierce necessity for haste. We in the chapel were not left long to watch the scene from the windows. While yet the main street of Grand Pré was dolorous with the tears of the women and children, the doors of our prison opened and names were called. I heeded them not; but the sound of my own name pierced my gloom; and I went out. In the tingling air I awoke a little, to gaze up the hill at the large house where Yvonne had lodged since the parsonage had been taken for a guard-house. No message came to me from those north windows. Then I turned, to find Marc at my side.

"Courage, cousin mine," he whispered. "We are not beaten yet. Better outside than in there. This much means freedom — and, once free, we'll act."

"No, Marc, I'm not beaten," I muttered. "But — it *looks* as if I were."

"Chut, man!" said he crisply. "You couldn't do a better thing to bring her to her senses than you are doing now."

It was but a few steps down to the lane, and there we found ourselves in a jumble of heaped carts and blue-skirted, weeping women. My head was

paining me sorely — a numb ache that seemed to rise in the core of my brain. But I remember noting with a far-off commiseration the blubbered faces of the women, and their poor little solicitudes for this or that bit of household gear which, from time to time, would fall crashing to the ground from the hastily laden carts. I found spirit to wonder that the tears which had exhausted themselves over the farewell to fatherland and hearth-side should break out afresh over the cracking of a gilded glass or the shattering of a blue and silver jug. The women's lamentations in a little hardened me, so that my ears ignored them; but the wide-eyed terrors of the children, their questions unanswered, their whimpering at the cold that blued their hands, all this pierced me. Tears for the children's sorrow gathered in my heart, till it was nigh to bursting; and this curbed passion of pity, I think, kept my sick body from collapse. It in some way threw me back from my own misery on to my old unroutable resolution.

"*I will win!*" I said in my heart, as we came down upon the wharf at the Gaspereau mouth. "Though there seems to be no more hope, there is life; and while there is life, I hold on."

When we reached the wharf the ebb was well advanced. The boats could not get near the wharf. Women had to wade ankle-deep in freezing slime to reach them. The slime was churned with

the struggle of many feet. The stuff from the carts was at times dropped in the ooze, to be recovered or not as might chance. The soldiers toiled faithfully, and their leggings to the knee were a sorry sight. They were patient, these red-coats, with the women, who often seemed to lose their heads so that they knew not which boat they wanted to go in. To the children every red-coat seemed tender as a mother. For any one, indeed, they would do anything, except endure delay. Haste, haste, haste was all—and therefore there was calamitous confusion. While I stood on the wharf awaiting the order to embark, I saw a stout girl in a dark-red stomacher and grey petticoat throw herself screaming into the water where it was about waist deep, and scramble desperately to another boat near by. No effort was made to restrain her. Dripping with tide and slime she climbed over the gunwale; and belike found what she sought, for her cries ceased. Again I noted—Marc called my attention to it—a small child being passed from one boat to the other, as the two, bound for different ships, were about diverging. The mother had stumbled blindly into one boat while the child had been tossed into the other. In the effort to remedy this oversight the child was dropped into the water between the boats. The screams of the mother were like a knife in our ears. Two sailors went overboard at

once, but there was some delay ere the little one was recovered. Then we saw its limp body passed in over the boat-side; whether alive or dead we could not judge; but the screams ceased and our ear-drums blessed the respite.

With the next boat came our turn; and I found myself wading down the slope of icy ooze. I heard Marc, just behind me, mutter a careless imprecation upon the needless defiling of his boots. He was ever imperturbable, my cousin,—a hot heart, but in steel harness.

We loaded the roomy long-boat till the gunwale was almost awash. The big oars creaked and thumped in the rowlocks. We moved laboriously out to the ships, which swung on straining cable in the tide. As we came under her black-wall side, with the turbid red-grey current hissing past it, men on deck caught us with grapsnels, and we swung, splashing, under the stern. Then, the tide being very troublesome, we were drawn again alongside.

Marc was at my elbow. "Look!" he cried, pointing to the ridge behind the village. I saw a wide-roofed cottage on the crest break into flame. There was a wind up there, though little as yet down here in the valley; and the flames streamed out to westward, the black smoke rolling low and ragged above them.

"So goes all Grand Pré in a little!" muttered Marc.

"It is P'tit Joliet's house!" said I.

"Yes," said a steady young voice behind me; and I turned to see Petit Joliet himself, watching with undaunted eyes the burning of his home. "Yes, and it was a fine house. It would have hurt my father sorely, were he alive now, to see it go up in smoke like that."

"Well, you have a brave heart," said I, liking him well as I saw his firmness.

"Oh," said he, "the only thing that is troubling me is this — shall I find my mother on this ship? They are making mistakes now, these English, in their haste to be done with us. I'm worried."

"If she is not on board," said my kind Marc, "we'll try and keep a watch on the boats; and if we see her bound for the wrong ship we'll let the guard know. They *want* to keep families together, if they can."

This was Marc, ever careful of others. But his good purpose was like to have been frustrated soon as formed; for scarce were our feet well on deck when our hands were clapped in irons, and we were marched off straight to the hold.

"Sorry, sir. Can't help it. So many of you, you know," said the red-coat apologetically, as I stretched out my wrists to him.

But glancing about the crowded deck I descried my good friend, Lieutenant Waldron, busily unravelling the snarl of things. In answer to my

hail he came at once, warm, friendly, and trying not to see my irons.

"One last little service, sir!" I cried. "Little to us, it may be great to others. You see we are ironed, Captain de Mer and I. We will give our word to neither attempt escape nor in any way interfere with this sorry work. Let us two wait here on deck till the ship sails. We know all these villagers; and we want to help you avoid the severance of families."

"It is little to grant for you, my friend," said he, in a feeling voice. "You cannot know how my heart is aching. I will speak to the captain of the ship, and you shall stay on deck till the ship sails."

Marc thanked him courteously, but I with no more than a look, for words did not at that time seem compliant to say what I desired them to say. They are false and treacherous spirits, these words we make so free with and trust so rashly with affairs of life and death. How often do they take an honest meaning from the heart and twist it to the semblance of a lie as it leaves the lips! How often do they take a flame from the inmost soul, and make it ice before it reaches the soul toward which it thrilled forth! It has been my calling to work with words in peace, as with swords in time of war; and I know them. I do not trust them. The swords are the safer.

Chapter XXIX

The Hour of her Desolation

RETURNING from a brief word with the ship-captain, — a very broad-bearded, broad-chested man, in a very rough blue coat, — Lieutenant Waldron passed us hastily, and signified that it was all right. With this sanction we pushed along the crowded deck in order to gain a post of vantage at the bow. The vessel, whose hold was now to be our new and narrow cage, was one of those ordinarily engaged in the West Indian trade. Our noses told us this. To the savours of fish and tar which clung in her timbers she added a foreign tang of molasses, rum, and coffee. As we stumbled up the cluttered deck, lacking the balance of free hands, these shippy smells were crossed in curious, pathetic fashion by the homely odours of the blankets, clothes, pillows, and other household stuff that lay about waiting for storage. Here a woman sat stolidly upon her own pile, with a mortgage on the future so long as she kept her bedding in possession; and there a youngster,

already homesick, for his wide-hearthed cabin, sobbed heavily, with his face buried in an old coat of his father's.

For hours, in the bitter cold, we held our post in the bow of the ship and watched the boats go back and forth. Of the old mother of Petit Joliet we saw nothing. We judged perforce that she had been moved early and carried to the other ship, which swung at anchor a little up the channel. We were able — I say we, though Marc did all, I being, as it were, drowned in my own dejection — we were able to be of service in divers instances. When, for example, young Violet was brought aboard with another boat-load from the chapel prison, we made haste to tell the guards that we had seen his mother and sisters taken to the other ship. As a consequence, when the boat went back to the wharf it carried young Violet; so he and his were not divided in their exile.

By the very next boat there came to us a black-browed, white-lipped woman, from whose dry eyes the tears seemed all drained out. She carried a babe-at-breast, while two thin little ones clung to her homespun skirt. As soon as she reached the deck she stared around in wild expectation, as if she thought to find her husband waiting to receive her. Not seeing him, she straightway fainted in a heap. It chanced I knew the woman's face. She was the wife of one Caspar Besnard, of Pereau,

whom I had seen taken, early in the day, to the other ship. He was conspicuous by reason of having red hair, a marvel in Acadie; and therefore my memory had retained him, though he concerned me not. Now, however, he did concern me much. A few words to the officer of the guard, and the poor woman, with her children, was transferred to where she doubtless found her husband.

Such cases justified, in our jailers' eyes, the favour that had been shown us. Meanwhile our ship had filled up. We had seen Long Philibert and La Mouche brought aboard, but had not spoken with them. "Time for that later," Marc had said. I had watched for Petit Joliet's mother; and I had watched eagerly for old Mother Pêche; but in vain. While yet the boats were plying, heavy laden, between the shore and the other ship, we found ourselves ready for departure. Our boats were swung aboard; and the English *Yeo, heave ho!* arose as the sailors shoved on the capstan. Lieutenant Waldron, after an all but wordless farewell, went ashore in the gig with two soldiers. The rest of the red-coats stayed aboard. They had been reënforced by a fresh squad who were marched down late to the landing. These, plainly, were to be our guard during the voyage; and I saw with a sort of vague resentment that a tall, foppish exquisite of an officer, known to me by sight, was to command this guard.

He was one Lieutenant Shafto, whom we had seen two or three times at the chapel prison ; and I think all disliked him for a certain elaborate loftiness in his air. It came to my mind dimly that I should well rejoice to cross swords with him, and I hinted as much to Marc.

"Who knows?" said my unruffled cousin ; "we may live to see him look less complacent." His smile had a meaning which I could not fathom. I could see no ground for his sanguine satisfaction ; and I dared not question where some enemy might overhear. I thought no more of it, therefore, but relapsed into my apathy. As we slipped down the tide I saw, in a boat-load just approaching the other ship, a figure with a red shawl wrapped round head and shoulders. This gave me a pang, as I had hoped to have Mother Pêche with me, to talk to me of Yvonne and help me to build up the refuge of a credulous hope. But since even that was denied me — well, it was nothing, after all, and I was a child ! I turned my eyes upon the house, far up the ridge, where the Lamouries had lodging. It was one of four, standing well aloof from the rest of the village ; and I knew they all were occupied by those prudent ones of the neighbourhood who had been wise in time and now stood safe in English favour. The doom of Grand Pré, I knew, would turn aside from them.

But on the emptied and desolated village it was even now descending. Marc and I, unnoticed in our place, were free to watch. So dire was even yet the confusion on our deck, so busy seamen and soldiers alike, that we were quite forgotten for a time. The early winter dark was gathering upon Blomidon and the farther hills; but there was to be no dark that night by the mouth of Gaspereau.

The house of Petit Joliet, upon the hill, burned long alone. It was perhaps a signal to the troops at Piziquid, twenty miles away, telling them that the work at Grand Pré was done. Not till late in the afternoon was the torch set to the village itself. Then smoke arose suddenly on the westernmost outskirts, toward the Habitants dyke. The wind being from the southeast, the fire spread but slowly against it. As the smoke drove low the flames started into more conspicuous brilliance, licking lithely over and under the rolling cloud that strove to smother them. These empty houses burned for the most part with a clear, light flame; but the barns, stored with hay and straw, vomited angry red, streaked with black. Up the bleak hillside ran the terrified cattle, with wildly tossing horns. At times, even on shipboard, we caught their bellowings. They had been turned loose, of course, before the fires were started, but had remained huddled in the familiar barnyards until this horrible and inexplicable cataclysm drove

them forth. Far up the slope we saw them turn and stand at gaze.

In an hour we observed that the wharf was empty, and the other ship hoisting sail. Then the fires sprang up in every part of the village at once. They ran along the main street below the chapel; but they came not very near the chapel itself, for all the buildings in its immediate neighbourhood had been long ago removed, and it stood in a safe isolation, towering in white solemnity over the red tumult of ruin.

"The chapel will be a camp to-night, instead of a prison," said Marc at my ear, his grave eyes fixed and wide. "It will be the last thing to go—it and the Colony of Compromise yonder up the hill."

"But who shall blame them for the compromise?" I protested, unwilling to hear censure that touched the father of Yvonne.

Marc shrugged his shoulders at this. He never was a lover of vain argument.

"I wonder where the Black Abbé is at this moment!" was what he said, with no apparent relevancy.

"Not yet in his own place, I fear!" said I.

"The implication is a pious one," said Marc. "Yonder is the work of him, and of no other. He should be roasting now in the hottest of it."

I really, at this moment, cared little, and was at

loss for reply. But a bullying roar of a voice just behind us saved me the necessity of answering.

"Here, you two! What are ye doin' here on deck? Git, now! Git, quick!"

The speaker was a big, loose-jointed man, ill-favoured and palpably ill-humoured. I was pleased to note that the middle two of his obtrusive front teeth were wanting, and that his nose was so misshapen as to suggest some past calamitous experience. As I learned afterwards, this was our ship's first mate. I was too dull of mood — too sick, in fact — to be instantly wroth at his insolence. I looked curiously at him; but Marc answered in a quiet voice:

"Merely waiting here, sir, on parole and by direction, till the proper authorities are ready to take us below!" And he thrust out his manacled hands to show how we were conditioned.

"Well, here's proper authority, ye'll find out. Git, er I'll jog ye!" And he made a motion to take me by the collar.

I stepped aside and faced him. I looked him in the eyes with a sudden rage so deadly that he must have felt it, for he hesitated. I cared nothing then what befell me, and would have smashed him with my iron-locked wrist had he touched me, or else so tripped him and fallen with him that we should have gone overboard together. But he was a brute of some perception, and his hesitancy

most likely saved us both. It gave Marc time to shout — "Guards! Guards! Here! Prisoner escaping!"

Instantly along the red-lit deck came soldiers running — three of them. The mate had grabbed a belaying-pin, but stood fingering it, uncertain of his status in relation to the soldiers.

"Corporal," said Marc ceremoniously to one of them, discerning his rank by the stripes on his sleeve, "pardon the false alarm. There was no prisoner escaping. We were here on parole, by the favour of Lieutenant Waldron — as you yourself know, indeed, for we helped you this afternoon in getting scattered families together. But this man — we don't know who he is — was brutal, and threatening violence in spite of our defenceless state. Please take us in charge!"

"Certainly, Captain de Mer," said the man promptly. "I was just about coming for you!"

Then he turned to the mate with an air of triumphant aversion, in which lurked, perhaps, a consciousness of conflicting and ill-defined authorities.

"No belaying-pins for the prisoners!" he growled. "Keep them for yer poor swabs o' sailor lads."

As we marched down the deck under guard the sails overhead were all aglow, the masts and spars gleamed ruddily. The menacing radiance

was by this time filling the whole heaven, and the small, quick-running surges flashed under it with a sinister sheen. As we reached the open hatch I turned for a last look at Grand Pré.

The whole valley was now as it were one seething lake of smoke and flame, the high, half-shrouded spire of the chapel rising impregnable on the further brink. The conflagration was fiercest now along the eastern half of the main street, toward the water side. Even at this distance we heard the great-lunged roar of it. High over the chaos, like a vaulted roof upheld by the Gaspereau Ridge, arched an almost stationary covering of smoke-cloud, impenetrable, and red as blood along its under side. The smoke of the burning was carried off toward the Habitants and Canard — where there was nothing left to burn. Between the red stillness above and the red turbulence below, apart and safe on their high slope, gleamed the cottages of the Colony of Compromise. With what eyes, I wondered, does my beloved look out upon this horror? Do they strain sadly after the departing ships — or does the Englishman stand by and comfort her?

As I got clumsily down the ladder the last thing I saw — and the picture bit its lines in strange fashion on my memory — was the other ship, a league behind us, black-winged against the flame.

Then the hatch closed down. By the glimmer of a swinging lanthorn we groped our way to a

space where we two could lie down side by side. Marc wanted to talk, but I could not. There was a throbbing in my head, a great numbness on my heart. In my ears the voice of the Minas waves assailing the ship's timbers seemed to whisper of the end of things. Grand Pré was gone. I was being carried, sick and in chains, to some far-off land of strangers. My beloved was cared for by another.

"No!" said I in my heart (I thought at first I had spoken it aloud, but Marc did not stir), "when my foot touches land my face shall turn back to seek her face again, though it be from the ends of earth. It is vain, but I will not give her up. I am not dead yet — though hope is!"

As I thought the words there came humming through my brain that foolish saying of Mother Pêche's. Again I saw her on that spring evening bending over my palm and murmuring — "*Your heart's desire is near your death of hope!*"

"Here is my death of hope, mother," said I to myself. "But where is my heart's desire?"

And with that I laughed harshly — aloud.

It was an ill sound in that place of bitterness, and heads were raised to look at me. Marc asked, with a trace of apprehension in his voice :

"What's the matter, Paul? Anything to laugh at?"

"Myself!" I muttered.

"The humour of the subject is not obvious," said he curtly.

Chapter XXX

A Woman's Privilege

I DID not sleep that night — not one eye-wink — in the hold of the New England ship. Neither could I think, nor even greatly suffer. Rather I lay as it were numbly weltering in my despair. What if I had known all that was going on meanwhile in that other ship, a league behind us, sailing under the lurid sky!

The events which I am now about to set down were not, as will be seen, matter of my own experience. I tell what I have inferred and what has been told me — but told me from such lips and in such fashion that I may indeed be said to have lived it all myself. It is more real to me than if my own eyes had followed it. It is sometimes true that we may see with the eyes of others — of one other — more vividly than with our own.

In the biggest house of that "Colony of Compromise" on the hill — the house nearest the chapel prison — a girl stood at a south window watching the flames in the village below. The

flames, at least, she seemed to be watching. What she saw was the last little column of prisoners marching away from the chapel; and her teeth were set hard upon her under lip.

She was not thinking; she was simply clarifying a confused resolve.

White and thin, and with deep purple hollows under her great eyes, she was nevertheless not less beautiful than when, a few months before, joyous mirth had flashed from her every look and gesture, as colored lights from a fire-opal. She still wore on her small feet moccasins of Indian work; but now, in winter, they were of heavy, soft, white caribou-skin, laced high upon the ankles, and ornamented with quaint pattern of red and green porcupine quills. Her skirt and bodice were of creamy woollen cloth; and over her shoulders, crossed upon her breast and caught in her girdle, was spread a scarf of dark-yellow silk. The little black lace shawl was flung back from her head, and her hands, twisted tightly in the ends of it, were for a wonder quite still — tensely still, with an air of final decision. Close beside her, flung upon the back of a high wooden settee, lay a long, heavy, hooded cloak of grey homespun, such as the peasant women of Acadie were wont to wear in winter as an over-garment.

A door behind her opened, but Yvonne did not turn her head. George Anderson came in. He

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came to the window, and tried to look into her eyes. His face was grave with anxiety, but touched, too, with a curious mixture of impatience and relief. He spoke at once, in a voice both tender and tolerant.

"There go the last of them, poor chaps!" he said. "Captain Grande went some hours ago — quite early. I pray, dear, that now he is gone — to exile indeed, but in safety — you will recover your peace of mind, and throw off this morbid mood, and be just a little bit kinder to — some people!" And he tried, with an awkward timidity, to take her hand.

She turned upon him a sombre, compassionate gaze, but far-off, almost as if she saw him in a dream.

"Don't touch me — just now," she said gently, removing her hand. "I must go out into the pastures for air, I think. All this stifles me! No, alone, *alone!*" she added more quickly, in answer to an entreaty in his eyes. "But, oh, I am sorry, so sorry beyond words, that I cannot seem kind to — some people! Good-by."

She left the room, and closed the door behind her. The door shut smartly. It sounded like a proclamation of her resolve. So — that was settled! In an instant her whole demeanour changed. A fire came back into her eyes, and she stepped with her old, soft-swaying lightness. In the room

which she now entered sat her father and mother. The withered little reminiscence of Versailles watched at a window-side, her black eyes bright with interest, her thin lips slightly curved with an acerb and cynical compassion. But Giles de Lamourie sat with his back to the window, his face heavy and grey.

"This is too awful!" he said, as Yvonne came up to him, and, bending over, kissed him on the forehead and the lips.

"It is like a nightmare!" she answered. "But, would you believe it, papa, the very shock is doing me good? The suspense—*that* kills! But I feel more like myself than I have for weeks. I must go out, breathe, and walk hard in the open."

De Lamourie's face lightened.

"Thou *art* better, little one," said he. "But why go alone at such a time? Where's George?"

But Yvonne was already at her mother's side, kissing her, and did not answer her father's question; which, indeed, needed no answer, as he had himself seen Anderson go into the inner room and not return.

"But where will you go, child?" queried her mother. "There are no longer any left of your sick and your poor and your husbandless to visit."

"But I will be my own sick, little mamma," she cried nervously, "and my own poor—and my own husbandless. I will visit myself. Don't

be troubled for me, dearies!" she added, in a tender voice. "I am so much better already."

The next moment she was gone. The door shut loudly after her.

"Wilful!" said her mother.

"Yes, more like she used to be. Much better!" exclaimed Giles de Lamourie, rising and looking out at the fires in a moment of brief absent-mindedness. "Yes, much better, George," he added, as Anderson appeared from the inner room.

But the Englishman's face was full of discomfort. "I wish she would not go running out alone this way," said he.

"Curious that she should prefer to be alone, George," said Madame de Lamourie, with deliberate malice. She was beginning to dislike this man who so palpably could not give her daughter happiness.

Yvonne, meanwhile, was speeding across the open fields, in the teeth of the wind. The ground was hard as iron, but there was little snow — only a dry, powdery covering deep enough to keep the stubble from hurting her feet. She ran straight for the tiny cabin of Mother Pêche, trusting to find her not yet gone. None of the houses at the eastern end of the village were as yet on fire. That of Mother Pêche stood a little apart, in a bushy

pasture-lot. Yvonne found the low door swinging wide, the house deserted; but there were red embers still on the hearth, whereby she knew the old woman had not been long away.

The empty house seemed to whisper of fear and grief from every corner. She turned away and ran toward the landing, her heart chilled with a sudden apprehension that she might be too late. Before she was clear of the bushes, however, she stopped with a cry. A man who seemed to have risen out of the ground stood right in her path. He was of a sturdy figure, somewhat short, and clad in dull-coloured homespun of peasant fashion. At sight of her beauty and her alarm his woollen cap was snatched from his head and his cunning face took on the utmost deference.

"Have no fear of me, mademoiselle,—Mademoiselle de Lamourie, if I may hazard a guess from your beauty," said he smoothly. "It is I who am in peril, lest you should reveal me to my enemies."

"Who are you, monsieur?" she asked, recovering her self-possession and fretting to be gone.

"A spy," he whispered, "in the pay of the King of France, who must know, to avenge them later, the wrongs of his people here in Acadie. I have thrown myself on your mercy, that I might ask you if the families who have found favour with the English will remain here after this work is done, or be taken elsewhere. I pray you inform me."

"Believe me, I do not know their plans, monsieur," answered Yvonne. "And I beg you to let me pass, for my haste is desperate."

"Let me escort you to the edge of the bush, then, mademoiselle," said he courteously, stepping from the path. "And not to delay you, I will question you as we go, if you will permit. Is the Englishman, Monsieur George Anderson, still here?"

"He is, monsieur. But now leave me, I entreat you."

She was wild with fear lest the stranger's presence should frustrate her design.

The man smiled.

"I dare go no farther with you than the field edge, mademoiselle," said he regretfully. "To be caught would mean" — and he put his hand to his throat with ghastly suggestion.

Relieved from this anxiety, Yvonne paused when she reached the open.

"I must ask you a question in turn, monsieur," said she. "Have you chanced to learn on which of the two ships Captain de Mer and Captain Grande were placed?"

"I have been so fortunate," replied the stranger, and the triumph in his thought found no expression in his deferential tone or deep-set eyes. Here was the point he had been studying to approach. Here was a chance to worst a foe and win favour from the still powerful, though far-distant, Black Abbé.

He paused, and Yvonne had scarce breath to cry "Which?"

"They are in the ship this way," he said calmly. "The one still at anchor."

"Thank you, monsieur!" she cried, with a passion in the simple words; and was straightway off across the red-lit snow, her cloak streaming out behind her.

"The beauty!" said the man to himself, lurking in the bushes to follow her with his eyes. "Pity to lie to her. But she's leaving — and that stabs Anderson; and she's going on the wrong ship — and that stabs Grande. Both at a stroke. Not bad for a day like this."

And with a look of hearty satisfaction on his face Le Fûret¹ (for Vaurin's worthy lieutenant it was) withdrew to safer covert.

Le Fûret smiled to himself; but Yvonne almost laughed aloud as she ran, deaf to the growing roar at the farther end of the village and heedless of the flaring crimson that made the air like blood. The wharf, when she reached it, was in a final spasm of confusion, and shouted orders, and sabbings. Now, she grew cautious. Drawing her cloak close about her face, she pushed through the crowd toward the boat.

Just then a firm hand was laid upon her arm,

¹ None of Vaurin's villains were taken by the English at the time of the great capture, for none dared come within a league of an English proclamation lest it should turn into a rope to throttle them.—P. G.

and a very low voice said in her ear,—with less surprise, to be sure, than on a former occasion by Gaspereau lower ford,—

“ *You* here, Mademoiselle de Lamourie? ”

Her heart stood still; and she turned upon him a look of such imploring, desperate dismay that Lieutenant Waldron without another word drew her to one side. Then she found voice.

“ Oh, if you have any mercy, any pity, do not betray me,” she whispered.

“ But what does this mean? It is my duty to ask,” he persisted, still puzzled.

“ I am trying to save my life, my soul, everything, before it’s too late! ” she said.

“ Oh,” said he, comprehending suddenly. “ Well, I think you had better not tell me anything more. I think it is *not* my duty to say anything about this meeting. You may be doing right. I wish you good fortune and good-by, mademoiselle! ”— and, to her wonder, he was off among the crowd.

Still trembling from the encounter, she hastened to the boat.

She found it already half laden; and in the stern, to her delight, she saw Mother Pêche’s red mantle. She was on the point of calling to her, but checked herself just in time. The boat was twenty paces from the wharf-edge; and those twenty paces were deep ooze, intolerable beyond

measure to white moccasins. Absorbed in her one purpose, which was to get on board the ship without delay, she had not looked to one side or the other, but had regarded women, children, soldiers, boatmen, as so many bushes to be pushed through. Now, however, letting her hood part a little from her face, she glanced hither and thither with her quick imperiousness, and then from her feet to that breadth of slime, as if demanding an instant bridge. The next thing she knew she was lifted by a pair of stout arms and carried swiftly through the mud to the boat-side.

After a moment's hot flush of indignation at the liberty, she realized that this was by far the best possible solution of the problem, as there was no bridge forthcoming. She looked up gratefully, and saw that her cavalier was a big red-coat, with a boyish, jolly face. As he gently set her down in the boat she gave him a radiant look which brought the very blood to his ears.

"Thank you very much indeed!" she said, in an undertone. "I don't know how I should have managed but for your kindness. But really it is very wrong of you to take such trouble about *me*; for I see these other poor things have had to wade through the mud, and their skirts are terrible."

The big red-coat stood gazing at her in open-mouthed adoration, speechless; but a comrade, busy in the boat stowing baggage, answered for him.

"That's all right, miss," said he. "Don't you worry about Eph. He's been carryin' children all day long, an' some few women because they was sick. He's arned the right to carry one woman jest fer her beauty."

In some confusion Yvonne turned away, very fearful of being recognized. She hurriedly squeezed herself down in the stern by Mother Pêche. The old dame's hand sought hers, furtively, under the cloak.

"I went to look for you, mother," she whispered into the red shawl.

"I knew you'd come, poor heart, dear heart!" muttered the old woman, with a swift peering of her strange eyes into the shadow of the girl's hood.

"I waited for you till they *dragged* me away. But I knew you'd come."

"How did you know that, mother?" whispered Yvonne, delighted to find that this momentous act of hers had seemed to some one just the expected and inevitable thing. "Why, I didn't know it myself till half an hour ago."

Mother Pêche looked wise and mysterious.

"I knew it," she reiterated. "Why, dear heart, I knew all along you loved him."

And at last, strange as it may appear, this seemed to Yvonne de Lamourie, penniless, going into exile with the companionship of misery, an all-sufficient and all-explicative answer.

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Chapter XXXI

Young Will and Old Wisdom

MOTHER PÊCHE lived to do good deeds, and loved to think she did them from an ill motive. Her witchcraft, devoutly believed in by herself, and by a good half of Grand Pré as well, was never known to curse, but ever to bless; yet its white magic she called black art. There was no one sick, there was no one sorrowful, there was no child in all Grand Pré, but loved her; yet it was her whim to believe herself feared, and in hourly peril of anathema. Even Father Fafard, whom she affected to deride, but in truth vastly reverenced, found it hard to maintain a proper show of austerity toward this incomprehensible old woman.

The boat, soon loaded, went dragging through the flame-lit tide toward the ship. The old dame sat clutching Yvonne's hand under the warm privacy of the cloak. Here was a weight off her mind. She loved Yvonne de Lamourie and Paul Grande better than any one else in the world; and with

all her heart she believed that to hold them apart would mean ruin to others in the end, as well as to themselves. This which had now come about (she had trembled lest Yvonne should not prove quite strong enough at the last) seemed to her the best exit from a bad closure. Anderson she had ever regarded with hostile and unreasoning contempt; and now it suited her whim to tell herself that a part of her present satisfaction lay in the thought of him so ignominiously thwarted. But in very truth she believed that the thwarting was for his good; that he would recover from his hurt in time, and see himself well saved from the life-long mordancy of a loveless marriage. In a word, what Mother Pêche wanted was the good of those she loved, and as little ill as might be to those she accounted enemies.

Though the boat was packed with intimates of hers, she was absorbed in studying so much of Yvonne's face as could be seen through the half-drawn hood. "She is, indeed, much better already," said the old dame to herself. "This *was* the one medicine."

Yvonne, for her part, had no eyes but for the ship she was approaching. Eagerly she scanned the bulwarks. Women's heads, and children's, she saw in plenty; but no men, save the sailors and a few red-coats.

"Are none of the — are there no *men* on this

ship?" she whispered to Mother Pêche, in a sudden awful doubt.

"But think, *chérie*," muttered the old woman, "these men are dangerous. Would they be left on deck like women and children? But no, indeed. They are in the hold, surely; and in irons belike. But they are there — or on the other ship," she added uneasily in her heart.

By this the boat was come to the ship-side. By some one's carelessness it was not rightly fended, and was suffered to bump heavily. One gunwale dipped; an icy flood poured in; there was imminent peril of swamping.

Women jumped up with screams, and children caught at them, terror-stricken by the looming black wall of the ship's side. The boat-men cursed fiercely. The two soldiers in the boat shouted: "Sit down! damn you! sit down!" with such authority that all obeyed at once. The shrill clamour ceased; the peril was over; the embarkation went on. Mother Pêche, with nerves of steel, had but gripped the more firmly upon Yvonne's hand. As for Yvonne, she had apparently taken no note of the disturbance.

Driven by a consuming purpose, which had gathered new fuel from the picture of the fettered captives in the hold, Yvonne had no sooner reached the deck than she started off to find the

captain. But Mother Pêche was at her elbow on the instant, clinging to her.

"I must see the captain at once!" exclaimed Yvonne, "and make some inquiry — find out something!"

"Yes, *chérie*," whispered the old dame, with loving irony, "and get yourself recognized, and be taken back next boat to Monsieur George Anderson."

The girl's head drooped. She saw how near she had been to undoing herself through impatience. She submissively followed the red shawl to a retired place near the bow of the ship. There the two settled themselves into a warm nest of beds and blankets, wherefrom they could watch the end of the embarking. But what more engrossed their eyes was the end of Grand Pré; for by now the sea of fire was roaring over more than half the village, the whole world seemed awash with ruddy air, and the throbs of scorching heat, even at their distance and with the wind blowing from them, made them cover their faces from time to time and marvel if this could be a December night.

Fascinated by the monstrous roar, the mad red light, the rolling level canopy of cloud, the old woman sat a long time silent, her startling eyes very wide open, her hawk face set in rigid lines. But the lines softened, the eyes filmed suddenly,

at a sound close beside her. Yvonne had buried her face in a coloured quilt, and was sobbing tempestuously.

"It is well! It had to come! It was just a pulling of herself up by the roots to leave her father and mother, poor heart!" thought the old woman to herself. Then after a few minutes, she said aloud:

"That is right, dear heart! Cry all you can. Cry it all out. You have held it back too long."

"Oh, how could I leave *them* so? How could I be so cruel?" moaned the girl, catching her breath at every word or two. "They will die of sorrow, I know they will!"

"No, *chérie*, they will not die of sorrow," said the old dame softly. "They will grieve; but they have each other. And they will see you again; and they will know you are safe, with your — *husband*," she finished slowly.

Yvonne was silent at the word; but it was not repeated, though she listened for it.

"But how will they know I am safe?" she asked.

"Because," said the old woman, rising nimbly to her feet, "the sailors are getting up the anchor now, and there is the last boat returning to the land. I go to send word by them, saying where you are. It is too late for any one to follow you now."

She went to the side of the ship, and called to the boat as it rowed away:

"Will you have the goodness, gentlemen, to send word to Monsieur de Lamourie that his daughter is safe and well, and that she has of her own choice gone into exile for a reason which he will understand; but that she will come back, with love, when things are something changed?"

The boat stopped, and the soldiers listened with astonishment to this strange message. There was a moment of indecision, and she trembled lest the boat should put back. But there was no one aboard with authority to thwart the will of Mademoiselle de Lamourie, so a doubtful voice cried:

"The message shall be delivered."

The oars dipped again, and the boat ran swiftly toward the landing; and the ship sped smoothly out with the tide.

The hawk face in the red shawl hurried back to Yvonne. The girl, sorely overwrought, had once more buried her head in the quilt, that she might the more unrestrainedly give way to her tears. Though she had no least dream of going back, nevertheless the sending of the message, and the realization that the ship was actually under way, had overwhelmed her. Moreover, it had been for weeks that she had endured the great strain dry-eyed, her breast anguished for the relief of tears. Now that the relief had come, however, it threat-

ened to grow excessive, too exhausting in its violence. Mother Pêche sat beside her, watching for a while in silence. Then she seemed to think the passionate outburst should be checked. But she was far too wise to say so.

"That's right, dearie," murmured the subtle old dame at the girl's ear. "Just cry as hard as you like, if it does you good. There's so many women crying on this ship, poor souls, that you're no ways noticeable."

So many women crying! True, they had not the same to cry about that she had, but Yvonne felt that her grief was suddenly cheapened. She must try to be less weak than those others. With an obstinate effort she strangled her sobs. Her shoulders heaved convulsively for a minute or two, and then, with a strong shudder, she sat up, throwing back her deep hair and resolutely dash-
ing the tears from her eyes.

"What a fool I am, mother!" she cried. "Here am I, where, after weeks of dreadful thinking, I deliberately made up my mind to be. And I do not repent my decision — no, not for one instant. It *had to be*. Yet — why, I'm acting just like a baby! But now I'm done with tears, mother. You shall see that I am strong enough for what I've undertaken."

"Of course you are, dear heart!" said the old woman softly. "The bravest of us women must

have our cry once in a while, or something is sure to go wrong inside of us."

"And now hadn't I better find the captain, and ask who's on board?" cried Yvonne, springing lightly to her feet, and no longer troubling to keep the hood about her face.

"But no, *cherie!*" urged the old woman. "Don't you see how every one is still busy, and shouting, and cursing, and unpleasant? This is not the time. Wait just a little. And tell me, now, how you got away."

Yvonne sat down again, and told the whole story, vividly, with light in her eyes, and with those revealing gestures of her small hands. The old woman's face darkened at the tale of the spy.

"And so you see, mother," she concluded, "I feel very confident that he is in this ship — for the man could have no reason to lie to me about it. I am sure from his face that he is the kind of man to do nothing without a reason."

"Tell me what he looked like, *cherie!*" said the old woman, the whites of her eyes flashing nervously.

Yvonne described him — she made him stand there on the deck before them. Mother Pêche knew that picture well. Le Fûret was one of the few living creatures she feared. She rose to her feet, and involuntarily cast an eager look in the direction of the other ship, whose sails, a league away, shone scarlet in that disastrous light.

"What is the matter?" asked Yvonne, in swift alarm.

"My old legs need stretching. I was too long still," said Mother Pêche.

"No, you are troubled at something. Tell me at once," cried Yvonne, rising also, and letting her cloak drop.

"Yes, *chérie*, yes!" answered the old woman, much agitated, and not daring to deceive her. "I *am* much troubled. That was Le Fûret, Vaurin's man, whom Captain Grande knocked down that day at the forge. He would do anything. He would lie even to you!"

Yvonne grew pale to the lips.

"Then you think Paul is *not*" — she began, in a strained voice.

"I think he *may* not be in *this* ship," interrupted Mother Pêche hurriedly. "But I'll go right now and find out. Wait here for me." And she went off briskly, poking through the confusion with her staff.

She knew men, this old dame; and she quickly found out what she wanted to find out. Trembling with apprehension, she came back to Yvonne — and went straight to the point.

"No, no, dear heart!" she began. "He is not here. He is on the other ship yonder. I have a plan, though" —

But there was no use going on; for Yvonne had dropped in a faint.

Chapter XXXII

Aboard the "Good Hope"

MOTHER PÊCHE was not alarmed, but, like the shrewd strategist she was, made haste to turn the evil to good account. She summoned a soldier— by excellent chance that same boyish-faced, tall fellow who had so patly aided at the embarking; and he with the best will in the world and a fluttering in his breast carried Yvonne straight to the captain's cabin, where he laid her upon the berth. Then, at Mother Pêche's request, he went to beg the captain's presence for an instant in his cabin.

The ship was now well under way, directed by a pilot who knew the shoals and bars of Minas. The business of stowing baggage was in the hands of petty officers. The captain could be spared for a little; and without doubt the soldier's manner proclaimed more clearly than words that here was no affair of a weeping peasant. To such the captain would just now have turned a deaf ear, for he had all day been striving to harden his heart against the

sight of sorrows which he could not mitigate. He was an iron-grey, close-bearded man, this New England captain, with a stern mouth and half-shut, twinkling eyes. Rough toward men, he was gentle toward women, children, and animals. His name was John Stayner; and in Machias, Maine, whence he hailed, he had a motherless daughter of eighteen, the core of his heart, who was commonly said to rule him as the moon rules ocean. When John Stayner went to the cabin and saw Yvonne in his berth, her white eyelids just stirring to the first return of consciousness, there was small need of Mother Pêche's explanations. The girl's astonishing loveliness, her gentle breeding, the plain signals of her distress, all moved him beyond his wont. He straightway saw his own dark-haired Essie in like case — and forthwith, stirred by that fine chivalry which only a strong man far past youth can know, he was on Yvonne's side, though all the world should be against her.

As if their low voices were remote and speaking in a tongue but half understood, Yvonne heard them talking of her — the old woman explaining swiftly, concisely, directly; the New Englander speaking but now and then a word of comprehension. His warmth reached Yvonne's heart. She opened her great eyes wide, and looked up into the man's face with a trustful content.

His own eyes filled in response. To him it was

much the look of his Essie. He touched her hand with his rough fingers, and said hastily, "This cabin is yours, Miss — Mademoiselle de Lamourie, I mean, so long as you are on this ship. Good-night. I have much to do. Take care of her," he added, with a sudden tone of authority, turning to Mother Pêche. "To-morrow, when we are clear of these shoals and eddies, we'll see what can be done."

And before Yvonne could control her voice or wits to thank him, he was away.

She turned shining eyes upon the old woman.

"What makes him so kind?" she murmured, still half bewildered. "And what will he do?"

"He is a good man," said Mother Pêche, with decision. "I believe he will send us in a boat to the other ship, at the very first chance."

Yvonne's face grew radiant. She was silent with the thought for a few minutes. Then she glanced about the cabin.

"How did I come here?" she asked, raising herself on her elbow.

"This is the captain's own cabin, *chérie*," said the old woman, with triumph in her voice. "And a big, boy-faced red-coat carried you here, at my request, and looked as if he'd like to keep on carrying you forever."

"I cannot sleep now, mother!" exclaimed the girl, slipping out of the berth and drawing the woollen cloak about her. "Let us go on deck

awhile. Morning will come the more quickly so."

"Yes, to be sure. And I would look a last look on Grand Pré, if only on the flames of its dear roofs," agreed the old woman, obediently smothering a deep yawn. In truth, now that things bade fair to work her will, she wanted nothing so much as a good sleep. But whatever Yvonne wanted was the chief thing in her eyes. The two went on deck, and huddled themselves under the lee of the cabin, for there was a bitter wind blowing, and the ship was too far from Grand Pré now to feel the heat of the conflagration. The roaring of it, too, was at this distance diminished to a huge but soft sub-bass, upon which the creaking of cordage, the whistling of the wind, the slapping of the thin-crested waves, built up a sort of bitter, singing harmony which thrilled Yvonne's ears. The whole village was now burning, a wide and terrifying arc of flame from the Gaspereau banks to the woodland lying toward Habitants. Above it towered the chapel, a fixed serenity amid destruction. It held Yvonne's eyes for a while; but soon they turned away, to follow the lit sails of the other ship, now fleeting toward the foot of Blomidon. At last, with a shiver, she said to her sleepy companion:

"Come, mother, let us go back into the cabin and sleep, and dream what morning may bring to pass."

That of all which morning should bring to pass nothing might be missed, Yvonne was up and out on deck at the earliest biting daylight. She found the ship already well past Blomidon, the vale of desolation quite shut from view. To west and north the sky was clear, of a hard, steely pallor. The wind was light, but enough to control the dense smoke which still choked the greater half of the heavens. It lay banked, as it were, sluggishly and blackly revolving itself along the wooded ridge that runs southward from Blomidon. Straight ahead, across a wintry reach of sea, sped the other ship, with all sail set. It seemed to Yvonne's eyes that she was much farther ahead than the night before, and sailing with a dreadful swiftness.

"Oh, we can never catch up!" she cried, pressing one hand to her side and throwing back her head with a half-despairing gesture.

Mother Pêche, who had just come on deck, looked troubled. "We do certainly seem to be no nearer," she agreed reluctantly.

At this moment the captain came up, smiling kindly. He took Yvonne's hand.

"I hope you have slept, mademoiselle, and are feeling better," he said.

"Yes, monsieur, thanks to your great kindness," answered Yvonne, trying to smile, "but is not the other ship getting very far ahead? She seems to sail much faster than we do."

"On the contrary, my dear young lady," said John Stayner, the 'Good Hope' is much the faster ship of the two. We shall overhaul them, with this breeze, one hour before noon."

"Will we?" cried Yvonne, with other questions crowding into her eyes and voice.

The stern mouth smiled with understanding kindness.

"If we do not, I promise you I will signal them to wait," said he. "I find three families on this ship whose men-folk are on the other. It was great carelessness on some one's part. I will send them in the boat with you, mademoiselle,—and gather in as many blessings as I can out of this whole accursed business."

"As long as I live, monsieur, there will be one woman at least ever blessing you and praying for your happiness." And suddenly seizing his hand in both of hers Yvonne pressed it to her lips.

A look of boyish embarrassment came over his weather-beaten face.

"Don't do that, child!" he stammered. Then, looking with a quizzical interest at the spot she had kissed, he went on: "This old hand is something rough and tarry for a woman's lips. But do you know, now, I kind of think more of it, rough as it is, than I ever did before. If ever, child, you should want a friend in that country of ours you're

going to, remember that Captain John Stayner, of Machias, Maine, is at your call."

To escape thanks he strode off abruptly, with a loud order on his lips.

Easy in her mind, Mother Pêche went back to capture a little more sleep, Yvonne's restlessness having roused her too early. As for Yvonne, she never knew quite how that morning, up to the magical period of "one hour before noon," managed to drag its unending minutes through. It is probable that she ate some pretence of a breakfast; but her memory, at least, retained no record of it. All she remembered was that she sat huddled in her cloak, or paced up and down the deck and talked of she knew not what to the kind Captain John Stayner, and watched the space of sea between the ships slowly—slowly—slowly diminish.

For diminish it did. That marvel, as it seemed to her, actually took place—as even the watched pot will boil at last, if the fire be kept burning. While it yet wanted more than an hour of noon, the two ships came near abreast; and at an imperative hail from the "Good Hope" her consort hove to. A boat was quickly lowered away. Four sailors took the oars. Two women surrounded by children of all sizes were swung down into it; then the gratefully ejaculating old mother of Petit Joliet, the tear-stains of a sleepless night still salty

in the wrinkles of her smiles; then Mother Pêche, serene in the sense of an astonishing good fortune for those she loved; last of all, Yvonne—she went last, for self-discipline.

As Captain John Stayner moved to hand her over the side, she turned and looked him in the eyes. The words she wanted to say simply would not come—or she dared not trust her voice; but the radiance of her look he carried in his heart through after-years. A minute more, and the boat dropped astern; and Yvonne's eyes were all for the other ship. But Mother Pêche looked back; and she saw, leaning hungrily over the taffrail of the "Good Hope," the long form of the boy-faced soldier who had twice carried Yvonne in his fortunate arms.

Chapter XXXIII

The Divine Right of Queens

WHEN Yvonne stood at last upon the deck of the ship of her desire, her heart, without warning, began a far too vehement gratulation. Her cloak oppressed her. She dropped it, and stood leaning upon Mother Pêche's shoulder. She grew suddenly pale, breathing with effort; and one hand caught at her side.

The apparition made a wondrous stir on deck. To those who had ever heard of such a being, it appeared that the Witch of the Moon, in all the indescribable magic of her beauty, had been translated into flesh. Men seemed upon the instant to find an errand to that quarter of the ship. Captain Eliphilet Wrye, who had been watching with great unconcern a transfer whose significance seemed to him quite ordinary, came forward in haste, eager to do the honours of his ship, and marvelling beyond measure at such a guest. Captain Eliphilet had traded much among the French of Acadie and New France. He knew well the difference

between the seigneurial and the *habitant* classes; and this knowledge was just what he needed to make his bewilderment complete.

"Here's the captain of the ship coming to see you, *chérie!*!" whispered Mother Pêche, squeezing the girl's arm significantly. Yvonne steadied herself with an effort, and turned a brilliant glance upon this important stranger. With his rough blue reefing-jacket, extremely broad shoulders, and excessively broad yellow-brown beard, Captain Eliphilet looked to her just as she thought a merchant-captain ought to look. She therefore approved of him, and awaited his approach with a smile that put him instantly at ease. As he came up, however, hat in hand and with considered phrases on his lips, the old woman forestalled him.

"Let me present you, Monsieur le Capitaine," said she, stepping forward with a courtesy, "to my mistress, Mademoiselle de Lamourie, of Lamourie Place."

"It is but ashes, alas! monsieur," interrupted Yvonne, holding out her hand.

"The ship is yours, Mademoiselle de Lamourie!" he exclaimed, and bowed with a gesture of relinquishing everything to her command. It was not for nothing Captain Eliphilet had visited Montreal and Quebec.

Yvonne dropped her lids for a second, and shook her head rebukingly.

"That is not English, monsieur," she protested, "but it is very nice of you. I should not know what to do with a ship just now; but I like our little pleasant French fictions."

Captain Eliphilet, however, could be French for a moment only.

"But you, mademoiselle, you — how comes such a one as you to be sailing away into exile?"

Yvonne's long lashes drooped again, and this time did not rise so quickly.

"I have reason to think, monsieur," she answered gravely, "that dear friends and kinsfolk of mine are on this ship, themselves going, fettered, into exile. I could not stay behind and let them go so. But enough of myself, monsieur, for the present," she went on, speaking more rapidly. "I want to ease the anxieties of these poor souls who have come with me. Is there among your prisoners a young man known as 'Petit Joliet'? Here is his mother come to look for him."

Captain Eliphilet summoned a soldier who stood near, and put the question to him in English.

"There is one by the name of Franse Joliet on the roll, captain," answered the red-coat, saluting.

"That's he! That's my boy!" cried his mother, catching the name. She had been waiting close by with a strained, fixed face, which now went to pieces in a medley of smiles and tears, like a reflection on still water suddenly broken. She

clutched Yvonne's hands, blessed and kissed them, and then rushed off vaguely as if to find Petit Joliet in durance behind some pile of ropes or water-butts.

"And Lenoir—Tamin Lenoir," continued Yvonne, her voice thrilling with joy over her task, "and Michel Savarin. Are they, too, in the hold?"

"Yes, miss," said the soldier, saluting again, and never taking his eyes from her face. She turned to the two women in their restless fringe of clingers; and they, more sober because more hampered in their delight, thanked her devoutly, and moved off to learn what more they could elsewhere.

Meanwhile another figure had drawn near—a figure not unknown to Yvonne's eyes.

When she first appeared Lieutenant Shafto, the English officer in command of the guard, was pacing the quarter deck, stiffly remote and inexplicably bored. He had two ambitions in life—the one, altogether laudable and ordinary, to be a good officer in the king's service; the other, more distinguished and uncommon, to be quoted as an example of dress and manners to his fellow-men. In London he had achieved in this direction sufficient success to establish him steadfastly in his purpose. Ordered to Halifax with his regiment, he had there found the field for his talent

sorely straitened. At Grand Pré, far worse: it was reduced to the dimensions of a back-door plot. Here on shipboard it seemed wholly to have vanished. Nevertheless, for practice, and for the preservation of a civil habit, he had clung to his niceties. Now, when he saw Yvonne, his first thought was to thank Heaven he had been as particular with his toilet that morning as if about to walk down Piccadilly.

He fitted his glass to his eye.

"Gad!" he said to himself, "it really is!"

He removed the glass, and giving it a more careful readjustment, stared again.

"Gad!" said he, "it is none other! A devilish fine girl! She couldn't be beat in all London for looks or wits. What does it mean? Given that cad Anderson the slip, eh? Discriminating, begad!"

Lieutenant Shafto had a definite contempt for Anderson, as a man who sat by the fire when he might have been fighting. If a man fought well or dressed well, Shafto could respect him. Anderson did neither. He was therefore easily placed.

"There's something rich behind this," went on the lieutenant to himself. "But, gad! there is a savour to this voyage, after all. There's a pair of bright eyes—devilish bright eyes—to dress for!"

He hitched his sword to a more gallant angle

as he stepped primly down the deck. He gave the flow of his coat an airy curve. He would have felt of his queue had he dared, to assure himself it was dressed to a nicety. He glanced with complaisance at his correct and entirely spotless ruffles. And by this he was come to mademoiselle's side, where he stood, bowing low, his cap held very precisely across his breast.

"The honour, mademoiselle! Ah, the marvel of it!" he murmured. "The ship is transfigured. I was but now anathematizing it as a most especial hell: I looked up, and it had become a paradise — a paradise of one fair spirit!"

Yvonne looked at him with searching eyes as he delivered this fantasia, then a trifle imperiously gave him her hand to kiss.

She had spoken passingly with him twice or thrice before, at Father Fafard's. She understood him — read him through: a man absurd, but never contemptible; to be quite heartily disliked, yet wholly trusted; to be laughed at, yet discreetly; vain, indomitable, a fighter and a fop; living for the field and the hair-dresser. Here was a man whom she would use, yet respect him the while.

"You do nobly, monsieur," she said, with a faint, enigmatic smile, "to thus keep the light of courtly custom burning clear, even in our darknesses."

"There can be no darkness where your face shines, mademoiselle," he cried, delighted not less with himself than with her.

It was a little obvious, but she accepted it graciously with a look, and he went on:

"I beg that you will let me place my cabin at your disposal during the voyage. You will find it narrow, but roomy enough to accommodate you and your maid."

Here Captain Eliphilet interfered.

"I claim the privilege, mademoiselle," said he, with some vexation in his tones, "of giving you the captain's cabin, which is by all odds the most commodious place on the ship—the *only* place at all suitable for you."

"The captain is right," said Shafsto reluctantly. "His cabin is the more comfortable; and I beg him to share mine."

In this way, then, the difficulty was settled, and Yvonne found herself in quarters of unwonted comfort for a West India trader, Captain Eliphilet being given to luxury beyond the most of his Puritan kin. She was contented with her accomplishment so far as it went; and having two gallant men to deal with she felt already secure of her empire. She read approbation, too, in those enigmatic eyes of Mother Pêche, with their whites ever glancing and gleaming. Moreover, as she sat down to luncheon, to the condiment of a bound-

ing heart and so much appetite as might nourish a pe-wee bird, she had two points gained to elate her. First, in passing the open hatchway which, as Captain Eliphilet told her, led to the prisoners' quarters, she had shaken lightly from her lips enough clear laughter to reach, as she guessed, those ears attuned to hear it; and second, she had the promises both of the broad-bearded captain and the beautifully barbered lieutenant, that her *cousins*, Monsieur de Mer and Monsieur Paul Grande, should be brought on deck to see her that very day.

"You should be very good to them, gentlemen," she said demurely, picking with dubious fork at brown strips of toasted herring on her plate. "My cousin Marc especially. *He* is half *English*, you know. He has the most adorable English wife, from Boston, with red hair wherein he easily persuades himself that the sun rises and sets."

"If you would have us love them for your sake, mademoiselle, love them not too much yourself," laughed the broad-bearded Captain Eliphilet, in vast good-humour; but the admirable lieutenant murmured:

"There is no hair but black hair—black with somehow a glint in it when the sun strikes—so."

And Mother Pêche, passing behind them and catching a flash from Yvonne's eye, smiled many thoughts.

Chapter XXXIV

The Soul's Supremer Sense

AT this point it seems proper that I should once more speak in my own person; for at this point the story of my beloved once more converges to my own.

I was awakened out of a bitter dream by Marc's lips moving at my ear in the stealthiest whisper. The first pallor of dawn was sifting down amongst us from the open hatch, opened for air. I nodded my head to signify I was awake and listening. There was a ringing gabble of small waves against the ship's side, covering up all trivial sounds; and I knew we were tacking.

"Listen now, Paul," said Marc's obscure whisper, like a voice within my head. "We have made a beginning earlier than we planned, because the guards were sleepy, and the noise of these light waves favoured us. You knew, or guessed, we had a plan. That wily fox, La Mouche, brought a file with him in his boot. It was sent to him while he was in the chapel prison. Grûl,

none other, sent it to him inside a loaf of bread — and, faith, thereby came a broken tooth. Your Grûl is wonderful, a *deus ex machinâ* every time. Well, we muffled the file in my shirt, and I scraped away, under cover of all this good noise, at the spring of La Mouche's handcuffs, till it gave. Now he can slip them on and off in a twinkling ; but to the eye of authority they are infrangible as ever. Oh, things are coming our way at last, for a change, my poor dejected ! We will rise to-night, this very coming night, if all goes well ; and the ship will be ours, for we are five to one."

There was a thrill in his whisper, imperturbable Marc though he was. Under the long chafing of restraint his imperturbability had worn thin.

My own blood flowed with a sudden warmth at his words. Here was a near hope of freedom, and freedom would mean to me but one thing — a swift return to the neighbourhood where I might achieve to see Yvonne. I felt the strong medicine of this thought working health in every vein.

"But how to-night ?" I whispered back, unwilling to be too soon sanguine. "It takes time to file fetters, *n'est-ce pas ?*"

"Oh, but trust La Mouche !" replied Marc. "He understands those bracelets — as you, my cousin, in days you doubtless choose to forget, understood the more fragile, but scarce less fetter-

ing, ones affected by fair arms in Montreal, or Quebec, or even Trois Pistoles."

I took it ill of my cousin to gall my sore at such a moment, but I strictly held my tongue; and after a vexing pause he went on:

"This wily La Mouche—with free hands and the knowing how, it is but a turn and a click, and the thing is off. It will be no mean weapon, too, when we're ready to wield it."

I stretched fiercely.

"Pray God it be to-night!" I muttered.

"S-sh-sh!" whispered Marc in my ear. "Not so loud, boy! Now, with this to dream on, go to sleep again. There'll be something to keep us awake next night."

"And when we've got the ship, what then?" I whispered, feeling no doubt of our success.

"We'll run into the St. John mouth," was the answer, "and then, leaving the women and children, with such men as will stay, at the Jemseg settlement, we will strike overland on snow-shoes for Quebec."

"And I for Grand Pré," said I doggedly.

I heard the ghost of a laugh flit from Marc's lips.

"Good dog! Hold fast!" said he.

There was no gainsaying it. I was better. For perhaps an hour or two I slept like a baby, to awake deeply refreshed. A clear light came down

the hatch, and there was a busy tramping of sailors overhead. It was high morning.

We were all awake, but silent. Sullen we might have seemed, and hopelessly submissive, but there was an alertness in the eyes flashing everywhere toward Marc and me, such as might have been warning to a folk less hardly indifferent than our captors. Two red-coated guards, taxed with the office of preventing conspiracy, paced up and down with their heads high and heeded us little. "What could these poor hand-cuffed wretches do, anyway?" was the palpable significance of their mien.

We desired indeed, at that time, to do nothing save eat the breakfast of weevilly biscuits just now served out to us, with good water still sweet from the wells of vanished Grand Pré. When one has hunger, there is rare relish in a weevilly biscuit; and I could have desired more of them than I got. With our fettered hands we ate like a colony of squirrels.

In the course of the morning it was not difficult, the guards being so heedless, to pass whispered word from one to another, so that soon all Marc's plans were duly laid down. His was the devising and ordering head, while La Mouche, for all his subtlety, and long Philibert Trou, for all his craft, were but the wielded instruments. It was an unwonted part for me to be playing, this of blindly

following another's lead; but Marc had done well, seeing my heavy preoccupation, to make no great demand upon my wits. My arm, he knew, would be ready enough at need. I was not jealous. I wanted to fight the English; but I wanted to think—well, of just one thing on earth. Looking back now, I trust I would have been more useful to our cause that morning had not Marc's capacity made wits of mine superfluous.

Throughout the morning we were all so quiet that the ship's rats, lean and grey, came out and ate the few crumbs we had let drop. Nevertheless, ere an hour before noon every man knew the part he was to play in the venture of next night. Long Philibert and La Mouche, with two other Acadian woodsmen skilled in ambuscade, were to deal with the guard silently. Marc and I, with no stomach for aught but open warfare, were to lead the rush up through the hatchway, to an excellent chance of a bayonet through our gullets. I felt justified now, however, in considering as to whether I should be likely to find Yvonne still at Grand Pré, casting a ray of beauty on the ruins, or at Halifax, disturbing with her eyes the deliberations of the governor and his council.

I said—one hour before noon. About that time the speed of the ship sensibly slackened, and there seemed presently a confusion, an excitement of some sort upon deck. We heard hails and sharp

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orders. There was a sound as of people coming on board. And then, of a sudden, a strange trembling seized upon me. It was in every nerve and vein, and my heart shook merely, instead of beating. Such a feeling had come over me once before — when Yvonne's eyes, turned upon me suddenly, seemed to say more than her lips would have permitted her to acknowledge. With a faint laugh at the very madness of it I could not but say to Marc:

"I think that is Yvonne coming!"

Whereupon he looked at me solicitously, as if he thought I was about to be taken with some sickness.

I bit my tongue for having said it.

Before many minutes, however, footsteps passed near the hatchway, and again the trembling took me. Then I caught a ripple of clear laughter — life has never afforded to my ears other melody so sweet as that laughter was, and is, and always will be. I sprang straight upon my feet, but instantly sat down again. Marc himself had heard it and was puzzled, for who that had ever heard the laughter of Yvonne de Lamourie could forget it?

"It — *is she!*" I said to him, in a thick voice.

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Chapter XXXV

The Court in the Cabin

IT is marvel to us now how the next hours of suspense did pass. Yet pass they did, and in a joy that was fairly certitude; for I could not doubt the witness of my inmost soul. At length I saw that Marc believed also. His grave, dark face grew luminous as he said, after long balancing of the matter:

"Her eyes, my Paul, have opened at the last instant, and she has chosen exile with thee! Even so would Prudence have done. And seeing how thou, my comrade, lovest her, I am ready to believe she may be almost such another as Prudence. Wherefore she is here, *quod erat demonstrandum!*"

Even as he spoke, a soldier came down the ladder and stood before us.

"I am bidden to say," said he, "that Mademoiselle de Lamourie desires to see Captain de Mer and Captain Grande on deck; and I am ordered by Lieutenant Shafsto to fetch you at once."

With such haste as was possible — it is not easy when handcuffed to climb ladders — we made our way on deck, and straight came Yvonne running to meet us, both small hands outstretched. Her eyes sank into mine for just one heart-beat — and that look said, "I love you." Then her guarded face grew maidenly impartial.

"My friends! My dear friends!" she cried; but stopped as if she had been struck. Our hands had not gone forth to meet hers. Her eyes fell upon our fetters. She turned slowly toward Captain Eliphilet and Lieutenant Shafte, who had followed close behind her. Flame gathered in her eyes, and a dark flush of indignation went over her face. She pointed at our handcuffs.

"This to my friends — in my presence!" she cried. "Of a truth your courtesy is tempered, gentlemen!"

With an angry exclamation Captain Eliphilet sprang forward to remove the offending irons; but the exquisite lieutenant was too quick for him. At a sign the guard who had brought us slipped them off, and stood holding them behind his back, while his officer was left free to make apologies.

These were abundant, and of such a tone as to leave no doubt of their sincerity. Moreover, by his manner, he included Marc and myself in his expressions of regret, which proved sound policy

on his part, and went far to win his pardon from Yvonne.

"Believe me, mademoiselle," he concluded, "it was never for one moment intended that these gentlemen, your friends, officers in the French army, and therefore, though my enemies, yet honoured members of my own profession, should thus obtrude upon your gentle eyes those chains, with which not their fault, but the chances of our profession have for a season embarrassed them."

This was so apt and so elegant a conclusion that Captain Eliphilet felt himself urged to some great things, if he would not be quite eclipsed in his guest's entrancing eyes.

"Indeed, mademoiselle," he made haste to say, "as these gentlemen are your friends and kinsmen, and you have dared so splendidly for their sake, they may say good-by to the irons for the rest of the voyage, if they will but give their word of honour that they will in no way use their liberty to the detriment of my duties and responsibilities, nor to free any of the other prisoners."

He turned to us with a very hearty air. Yvonne looked radiant with satisfaction. Lieutenant Shafto's face dropped — for he doubtless thought our continued freedom would much limit his privileges with Yvonne. But I spoke up at once, fore-stalling Marc.

"I need hardly assure you, Monsieur le Capi-

taine, that we do from our hearts appreciate your most generous courtesy. But beyond the few hours of freedom which we dare hope you may grant us each day, for the priceless solace of our fair kinswoman's company, we cannot in conscience accept a favour that would too enviably distinguish us from our felows."

Captain Eliphilet looked unaffectedly astonished. Yvonne looked hurt and disappointed for a moment; then her face changed, and I saw that her swift brain was drawing intricate inferences from this strange rejection of parole — to which Marc had assented in a word. As for the elegant Mr. Shafto, however, he was frankly delighted.

"Right soldierly said, gentlemen!" he exclaimed. "A good officer stands by his men. I am honoured in meeting you!" and with a very precise civility he shook hands with us in turn.

"But it is very cold here, is it not?" cried Yvonne, with a little shiver, pulling her cloak close. "Let me invite you all to my cabin."

This invitation she gave with a flying radiance of look at Captain Eliphilet, wherewith he stood a millionfold rewarded.

In the cabin I was not greatly astonished, though more than greatly pleased, to find Mother Pêche. The undisguised triumph in her eyes said, " Didn't I tell you? " — and in involuntary response to the challenge I thrust my hand into my breast and felt

the little deerskin pouch containing the tress of hair and the mystic stone. She smiled at the gesture.

I pressed the dear old witch's hand, and said in a low voice :

"In all my life to come I cannot thank you enough. But isn't it wonderful? I'm in fear each moment of waking, and to find it a dream."

"She *is* a dream, Master Paul!" said the old dame. "And see how all men dream when they look upon her!"

With a jealous pang I realized the truth of what she said; and thereupon I made haste to Yvonne's side, where I saw Marc, Shafsto, and Captain Eliph-alet all hanging devoutly upon her words. I was but a dull addition to the sprightly circle, for I was wondering how I should manage to get a word with her.

Had I but known her better I need not have wondered. Presently she broke off in the midst of a sparkling tirade, laid her hand upon my arm, and said :

"Will you pardon me, gentlemen, but I have a brief word awaiting the ear of Captain Grande," and calmly she walked me off to the cabin door.

"I presumed, perhaps too hastily, that you still wanted me, dear," was what she said.

I dared not look straight at her, for I knew that if I did so my face would be a flaunting proclama-

tion of my worship. I could but say, in a voice that strove for steadiness:

"Beloved, beloved! have you done all this for me?"

A happy mirth came into her voice as she answered:

"No, Paul, not quite all for you! I had to think a little of a certain good man, madly bent on marrying a woman who would, alas! (I know it too well) have made him a most unpleasant wife. George Anderson will never know what I saved him from. But *you* may, Paul? Aren't you a little bit afraid?"

I am well aware that in this supreme moment I betrayed no originality whatever. I could only repeat myself, in expressions which I need not set down. Trite as they were, however, she forgave them.

"We have so much to talk about, dear," she said, "but not now. We must go back to the others; and I must take your cousin Marc aside as I have done with you, so that this won't look too strange. Does *he* like me — approve of me?" she asked anxiously.

"Second only to his little Puritan he loves you," said I. "He knows everything."

Then, just as we turned back to the others, I whispered in her ear:

"Be prepared for events to-night!"

She gave me a startled look, understanding at once. Then indeed, as now, whatever is in my mind she is apt to read as if it were an open book.

"So soon? Oh, be careful for my sake!"

I could give no answer, for by this, the cabin being small, we were quite returned from our privacy.

For perhaps two hours Yvonne entertained us, not only conversing herself with a gracious wit that struck but to illumine, never to wound, but calling forth a responsive alertness in her cavaliers. Captain Eliphilet began to wonder at his own readiness of repartee and compliment. Lieutenant Shafsto forgot the perfect propriety of his ruffles, engrossed for once in another than himself. Even my imperturbable Marc yielded in some measure to the resistless bewilderment, and played the gallant with a quaint, fatherly air that pleased me. I, only, was the silent one. I could but listen, intoxicated, speaking when I could not escape it, and my ears averse to all words but those coming from her lips.

By and by—I was vexed that his discretion should bring the moment so soon—Marc made his adieux, insisting against much protest that he desired to keep his welcome unworn for the morrow. I could do naught save follow his example; but as I withdrew, Yvonne's eyes held me so that

my feet in going moved like lead. The broad-bearded captain and the impeccable lieutenant most civilly accompanied us to the door of our prison.

"This situation, gentlemen," said Marc, with a smile of careless amusement, "which your courtesy does so sweeten for us, is certainly not without the relish of strangeness."

"It shall be made as little strange as lies in our power to make it, sir," replied Captain Eliphilet heartily; and we parted with all expressions of esteem; not till their backs were turned upon us did we extend our wrists for the irons, which the discreet guard had kept hidden under the flap of his great-coat.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Sword and Silk

THAT night the weather fell thick, and, the wind freshening suddenly, the ship dropped anchor. Captain Eliphilet Wrye was not so familiar with the reefs and tides of Fundy that he cared to navigate her waters in the dark. This we considered very favourable to our enterprise; for the tide running strongly, and the wind against it, kicked up a pother that made the hold reëcho.

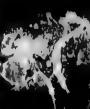
The time agreed upon was toward three, when those asleep are heaviest. I think that most of our men slept, but with that consciousness of events impending which would bring them wide awake on the instant. Marc, I know, lay sleeping like a child. But for me no sleep, no sleep indeed. I could not spare a minute from the delight of thinking and dreaming. Here I lay in irons, a captive, an exile,—but my beloved had come.

“She has come, my beloved!” I kept saying over and over to myself.

Then I tried planning for our future; but the morrow promised her presence, and for the time I could not get my thoughts past that. There was no need to discount future joy by drawing bills of dear anticipation. But it was tonic to my brain to look back upon the hopeless despair in which I had lain weltering so few hours before. Now they seemed years away—and how I blessed their remoteness, those sick hours of anguish! Yes, though I had not given up my purpose, I had surely given up the hope that kept it alive. Then Mother Pêche's soothsaying over the lines of my palm came back to me: "*Your heart's desire is nigh your death of hope!*"

Wonderful old woman! How came such wisdom to your simple heart, with no teachers but herbs, and dews, and stillnesses of the open marsh, and hill-whispers, and the unknown stars? Out of some deep truth you spoke, surely; for even as my hope died, had not my heart's desire come? And I said to myself, "It is but a narrow and shallow heart that expects to understand all it believes. Do we not walk as men blindfolded in the citadel of mystery? What seem to us the large things and unquestionable may, the half of them, be vain—and small, derided things an uninterpreted message of truth!"

My reverie was broken by Marc laying free hands upon mine.



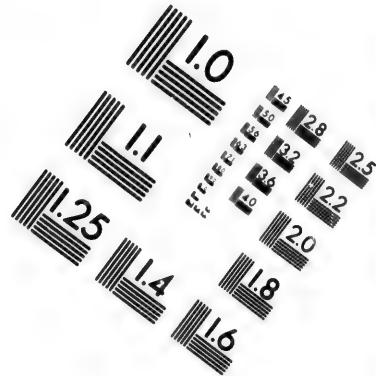
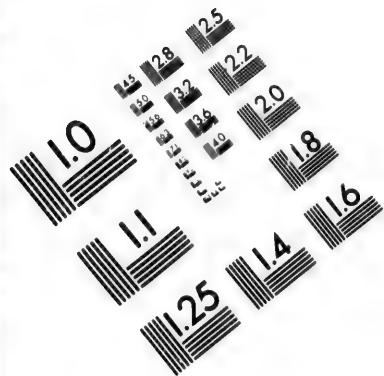
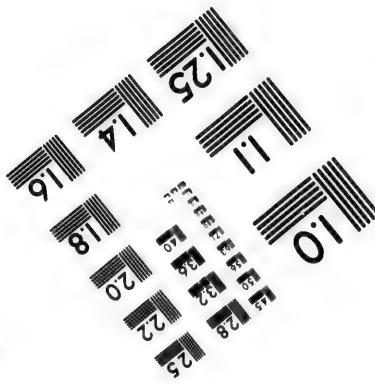
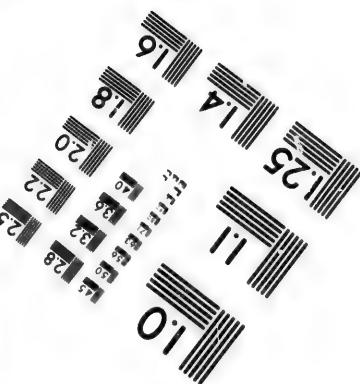
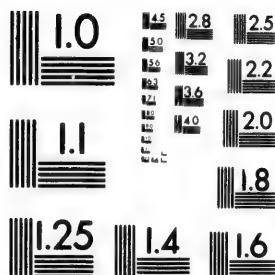


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"Are you awake?" he whispered. "The time has come. See! This is the way to open them." And very easily, as it seemed, he slipped the iron from my wrists.

"Feel!" he went on, in the same soft whisper. I followed his fingers in the dimness. There was no light but the murk of a smoky lanthorn some way off, where the guards sat dejectedly smoking, — and I caught the method of unlocking the spring. "Free your next neighbour, and pass the word along," continued Marc; and I did so. It was all managed with noiseless precision.

In a very few minutes — which seemed an hour — there was a sneeze from the furthermost corner of the hold, beyond the place where the guards sat. It was not the most natural and easy sneeze in the world, but it served. It was answered by another from the opposite corner. The shrill, silly sound was yet in the air when the ominous form of long Philibert Trou loomed high behind the sitting guards and fell upon one of them like fate; while at the same moment, like a springing cat, the lithe figure of La Mouche shot up at the other's throat.

For such skilled hands it was but a moment's work, and no noise about it. Like the rising of an army of spectres, every man came silently to his feet. Seizing the musket of the nearest guard, where he lay motionless, I glided to the hatch,

just far enough ahead of Marc to get my foot first on the ladder.

As I reached the deck the sentry, not three paces distant, was just turning. With a yell to warn his comrades he sprang at me. Nimbly I avoided his bayonet thrust, and the butt of my musket brought him down. I had reserved my fire for the possibility of a more dangerous encounter.

There were shouts along the deck — and shots — and I saw sailors running up, and then more soldiers — and I sprang to meet them. But already Marc was at my side, and a dozen, nay, a score, of my fellow-captives. In a breath, as it were, the score doubled and trebled — the hold seemed to spout them forth, so hotly they came.

There were but few shots, and a fall or two with groans. The thing was over before it was well begun, so perfect had been the surprise. We had all who were on deck in irons, save for three slain and one grievously wounded. Those who had been asleep in their bunks when the alarm was given now promptly gave themselves up, soldiers and sailors alike, being not mad enough to play out a lost game. Handcuffs were abundant, which made our work the simpler.

As I went forward, wondering where Shafato was this while, I was met by La Mouche and two others leading a prisoner. It was Captain Eliphilet, with

blood on his face, sorely dazed, but undaunted. Indignation and reproach so struggled within him that he could not for the moment find speech.

"Pardon, I beseech you, Captain Wrye," I made haste to say, "the need which has compelled me to make such rude return for your courtesy. This," and I tapped his irons with my finger, "is but for an hour or two at most, till we get things on our ship fitly ordered. Then, believe me, you will find that this is merely a somewhat abrupt reversal of the positions of host and guest."

I fear that Captain Eliphilet's reply was going to be a rude one, but if so it was quenched at his lips. The door of the cabin opened, a bright light streamed forth, and down it glided Yvonne in her white gown, the black lace over her head.

"Oh, Paul, what has happened? Are you — are you safe?" she asked breathlessly, 'twixt laughing and tears. The shooting and shouting had aroused her roughly.

"Quite safe, my dearest," I whispered. "And — the ship is ours."

All that this meant flashed upon her, and her face flushed, her eyes dilated. But before she found voice to welcome the great news, her glance fell upon Captain Eliphilet's blood-stained countenance, and her joy faded into compassion.

"Oh!" she cried, "you are *not* wounded,

undaunted. within him surely, surely!" And she pressed her hand-
speech. speech. kerchief pitifully to the blood-spots.

"It is nothing, nothing, mademoiselle, but a mere scratch, or bruise, rather," stammered Captain Eliphilet. Then she saw that his hands were fettered.

"Paul!" she exclaimed, turning upon me a face grown very white and grave. "And he was so kind to me! How could you!"

"As a matter of fact, I didn't, Yvonne," said I. "But this is what I am going to do."

Slipping off the irons I tossed them into the sea.

"Captain Wrye," said I to him, with a bow, "I have much yet to do, and I must not stay here any longer. May I commit to your charge for a little while what is more precious than all else?"

Yvonne thanked me with a look, and laid her hand on the captain's arm.

"We will dress your wound, monsieur," said she. "Mother Pêche has a wondrous skill in such matters." And she led the captain away.

By this Marc was come up, with a squad of his men fully armed. Some half score approached the second cabin. A window opened, a thin stream of fire flashed out, with a sharp report of a pistol; and a man fell, shot through the head. Another report, with the red streak in the front of it, and a tall Acadian threw up his arms, screamed chokingly, and dropped across a coil of rope.

The precise Lieutenant Shafto had awakened to the state of affairs.

"Down with the door, men, before he can load again!" shouted Marc, springing forward; and long Philibert picked up a light spar which lay at hand, very well suited to the purpose.

But there was no need of it. The door was thrown open, and in the light from Yvonne's cabin was revealed the form of the English officer. He stood in his doorway, very angry and scornful, the point of his sword thrust passionately against the deck in front of him. A fine and a brave figure he was, as he stood there in his stockings, breeches, and fairly beruffled shirt—for he had not just now taken time to perfect his toilet with the customary care. In this attitude he paused for a second, lightly springing his sword, and scowling upon us.

"I must ask you to surrender, monsieur," said Marc, advancing. "The ship is in our hands. I shall be glad to accept your parole."

"I will not surrender!" he answered curtly. "If there be a gentleman among you who can use a sword, I am willing to fight him. If not, I will see how many more of this rabble I can take with me." And he jerked his head toward the two whom he had shot down.

"I will cross swords with you," I cried, getting ahead of Marc, "and will count myself much

honoured in meeting so brave a gentleman. But you English took my sword from me, and up to the present have neglected to give it back."

"I have swords, of course, monsieur," he replied, his face lighting with satisfaction as he stepped back into his cabin to get them.

But some one else was not satisfied. Yvonne's hands were on my arm—her eyes, wide with terror, imploring mine. "Don't! It will kill me, dear! Oh, what madness! Have you no pity for me!" she gasped.

I looked at her reassuringly, not liking to say there was no danger, lest I should seem to boast; and so instant was her reading of my thought that even as I looked the fear died out of her face.

"It is nothing, dear heart. Ask Marc," I whispered. She turned to him with the question in her eyes.

"Paul is the best sword in New France," said Marc quietly, "not even excepting my father, the Sieur de Briart."

Now so quickly was the confidence of my own heart transferred into the heart of my beloved that she was no more afraid. Indeed, what she said was:

"You must not hurt him, Paul! He has been very nice to me!" and this in a voice so clear that Shafto himself heard it as he came out with the swords. It ruffled him, but he bowed low to her in acknowledgment of her interest.

"They are of the same length. Choose, monsieur!" said he, holding them out to me.

I took the nearest — and knew as soon as the hilt was in my hand that it was an honest weapon, of English make, something slow in action and lacking subtlety of response, but adequate to the present enterprise. Lanthorns were brought, and so disposed by Marc's orders that the light should fall fairly for one as for the other. The Englishman had regained his good temper, — or a civil semblance of it, — and marked the preparations with approval.

"You have had abundant experience, I perceive, in the arbitrament of gentlemen," said he.

"My cousin has, in particular, monsieur," replied Marc dryly. Whereupon Mr. Shafto turned upon me a scrutiny of unaffected interest.

A moment more, and the swords set up that thin and venomous whispering of theirs. Now, what I am *not* going to do, even to please Yvonne, is — undertake to describe that combat. She wishes it, because under my instruction she has learned to fence very cunningly herself. But to me the affair was unpleasant, because I saw from the first a brave gentleman, and a good enough swordsman as these English go, hopelessly overmatched. I would not do him the discredit of seeming to play with him. He fenced very hotly, too. He wanted blood, being bitter and humiliated. After a few

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minutes of quick play I thought it best to prick him a little sharply in the arm. The blood spurted scarlet over his white sleeve; and I sprang back, dropping my point.

"Are you satisfied, monsieur?" I asked.

"No, never! Guard yourself, sir!" he cried angrily, taking two quick steps after me.

During the next two minutes or so he was so impetuous as to keep me quite occupied; and I was about concluding to disarm him, when there came a strange intervention. It was most irregular; but the wisest of women seem to have small regard for points of stringency in masculine etiquette. At a most knowingly calculated moment there descended between us, entangling and diverting the points of our weapons,—what but a flutter of black lace!

"I will not have either of you defeated!" came Yvonne's voice, gayly imperious. "You shall *both* of you surrender at once, to me! There is no dis-honour, gentlemen, in surrendering to a woman!"

It was a most gracious thought on her part, to save a brave man from humiliation; and my worship of her deepened, if that were possible. As for the elegant Mr. Shafto, he was palpably taken aback, and glowered rudely for a space of some seconds. Then he came to himself and accepted the diversion with good grace. With a very low bow he presented his sword-hilt to Yvonne, saying:

"To you, and to you only, I yield myself a prisoner, Mademoiselle de Lamourie."

Yvonne took the sword, examined it with gay concern on this side and on that, tried it against the deck as she had seen him do, and then, without so much as a glance at Marc or me for permission, gravely returned it to him.

"Keep it, monsieur," she said. "I have no use for it at present; and I trust to hold my prisoners whether they be armed or defenceless."

"That you will, mademoiselle, I'll wager," spoke up Captain Eliphilet, just behind.

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Chapter XXXVII

Fire in Ice

SOME while after, as in my passing to and fro I went by the cabin for the fiftieth time, my expectation came true: the door opened, and Yvonne, close wrapped in her great cloak, stood beside me. I drew her under the lee of the cabin, where the bitter wind blew less witheringly. The first of dawn was just creeping bleakly up the sky, and the ship was under way.

"You are cold, dear," exclaimed Yvonne beneath her breath, catching my hand in her two little warm ones; and, faith! I was, though I had not had time to notice it till she bade me. The next moment, careless of the eyes of La Mouche, who stood by the rail not ten paces off, she opened her cloak, flung the folds of it about my neck, and drew my face down, in that enchanted darkness, to the sweet warmth of hers.

There were no words. What could those vain things avail in such a moment, when our pulses beat together, and our souls met at the lips, and

in silence was plighted that great troth which shal last, it is my faith, through other lives than this? Then she drew softly away, and, with eyes cast down, left me, and went back into her cabin.

I lifted my head. La Mouche stood by the rail, looking off across the faintly lightening water. As I passed near him he turned and grasped my hand hard.

"I am most glad for you, my captain!" he said quietly. But I saw that my joy was an emphasis to his own sorrow, and his very lips were grey for remembrance of the woman who had stricken him.

When it was full daylight we could see the other ship, a white speck on the horizon far ahead. Long before noon she was out of sight. The wind favouring us all day, before sunset we arrived off the grim portal through which the great river of St. John, named by Champlain, empties forth its floods into the sea. The rocky ridges that fence the haven were crested gloriously with rose and gold, and toward this inviting harbourage we steered—not without misgivings, however, for we knew not the channel or the current. In this strait we received unlooked-for aid. Captain Eliphilet, excited by some error in the course which we were shaping, and all in a tremble lest his loved ship fall upon a reef, offered his services as pilot. They were at once accepted. We knew he was

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as incapable of a treachery as his situation was of turning a treachery to profit. Himself he took the wheel; and on the slack of tide he steered us up to a windless anchorage at the very head of the harbour, beside the ruins of an old fort. The only sign of life was the huts of a few Acadian fishermen, so miserable as to have been quite overlooked by the doom that had descended on their race.

Our plan was to scatter the greater part of our company among the small Acadian settlements up the river — at Jemseg, Pointe Ste. Anne, and Medotec; while the rest of us, the trained men who would be needed in New France, accompanied by a half dozen women with daring and vitality for such a journey, would make our way on sledges and snow-shoes northward, over the Height of Land, down into the St. Lawrence valley, and thence to Quebec.

The two carronades on the deck of our ship we dropped into the harbour. We helped ourselves to all the arms and ammunition, with tools for the building of our sledges, and such clothing as our prisoners could well spare. Of the ship's stores we left enough to carry the ship safely to Boston. Yvonne gave Lieutenant Shafto a letter for her father and mother, which he undertook to forward to Halifax at the earliest opportunity. Then, three days after our arrival in the St. John, we loosed our captives every one, bade Captain Eliphale a

less eventful remainder to his voyage, and turned our back upon the huts of the fishermen. We crossed the Kennebeccasis River on the ice, where it joins the St. John, just back of the ridge which forms the northern rampart of the harbour. Thence we pushed straight up the main river, keeping close along the eastern shore.

The rough sledges which we had hastily thrown together were piled with our stores. They carried also such of the women and children as were not capable of enduring the march. The sledges ran easily on the level way afforded by the river, which was now frozen to the depth of a foot. In spots the ice was covered by a thin, hard-packed layer of snow; but for the most part it had been swept clean by the wind.

For my own part, I drew a light sledge, of which I had myself directed the construction, that it might be comfortable for Yvonne. It *was* comfortable, with a back and arms, and well lined with blankets. But she chose rather, for the most of the journey, to walk beside me, secretly proud to show her activity and endurance. It was Mother Pêche who, under strenuous protest, chiefly occupied my sledge. Her protests were vain enough; for Yvonne told her quietly that if she would not let herself be taken care of she would not trust her to face the Quebec journey, but would leave her behind at Jemseg. Though the old dame was a

witch, Yvonne had the will to have her way; and protest ended.

As we marched, a little aside from the main body, Yvonne now laying her mittenend hand upon my arm, and now drawing with me upon the sledge-rope, we had exhaustless themes of converse, but also seasons for that revealing silence when the great things get themselves uttered between two souls.

There were some practical matters, however, not without importance, which silence was not competent to discuss.

"Do you know any one at the Jemseg settlement, Paul?" she chanced to ask me, that first day of our marching.

"Yes," said I, with significance, taking merciless advantage of the question, "I know an excellent priest, dear heart!"

She reddened, and turned upon me deep eyes of reproach. But I was not abashed.

"Am I too precipitate, sweet?" I asked. "But do not think so. I know you will not. Consider all the strangeness of the situation, most dear, and give me the right to guard you, to keep you, to show openly my reverence and my love."

As she did not reply, it was clear enough that she found my reasoning cogent. I went on, with a kind of singing elation in my brain:

"Truly, in my eyes, you are my wife now, as —

do you remember? — I dared to call you that night as we came over the ridge, I to prison, you to — But no! I will not think of that. In deed and in truth, dear, I believe that God joined together us two, inalienably and forever, not months ago, but years ago — that day in the orchard, when our spirits met in our eyes. The material part of us was slow in awaking to the comprehension of that mystery, but" —

"Speak for yourself, Paul," she interrupted, with tantalizing suggestion.

I stopped short, forgetting all my eloquence.

"And you loved me then — and knew it!" I exclaimed, in a voice poignant with the realization of lost years.

She came very close against my side, and held my arm tightly, as she said, in a voice 'twixt mocking and caressing:

"I think I *might* have known it, Paul, had you helped me the least little bit — had the material part of you, let us say, been the least bit quicker of comprehension."

She forbore to hint at all that might have been different; but the thought of it kept me long silent.

On the next day, about sunset, we reached the Jemseg settlement. That same day Yvonne became my wife.

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Chapter XXXVIII

Of Long Felicity, Brief Word

"HOW many years, dear heart, since we made
that winter journey, thou and I, from
Jemseg to Quebec, through the illimitable snows?"

"Ten!" answers Yvonne; and the great eyes
which she lifts from her writing and flashes gayly
upon me grow tender with sweet remembrance.
During those ten years the destinies of thrones
have shifted strangely in the kaleidoscope of fate.
Empires have changed hands. New France has
been erased from the New World. Louisbourg
has been levelled to a sheep pasture. Quebec has
proved no more impregnable. The flag of Eng-
land flies over Canada. My uncle, the Sieur de
Briart, sleeps in a glorious grave, having fallen
with Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham. My
cousin Marc and I, having fought and bled for
France in all the last battles, and lain for months
in an English hospital, have accepted the new
masters of our country and been confirmed in
our little estates beside the Ottawa.

Redeeming my promise to Grûl, I have aided him in his vengeance on the Black Abbé — a strange, dark tale which I may one day set down, if ever time makes it less painful to my memory.

Much, then, have I endured in these ten years. But the remembrance of it appears to me but as a tinted glass, through which I am enabled to contemplate the full sun of my happiness.

Yvonne in these ten years has changed but to grow more beautiful. Bodily, there was, I think, no room for that change; but growth is the law of such a spirit as hers, and so into her perfect eyes, wells of light as of old, has come a deeper and more immeasurable wisdom. As to this perennial potency of her beauty, I know that I am not deluded by my passion; for I perceive the homage it compels from all who come within its beneficent influence. Even her mother, a laughingly malicious critic, tells me that my eyes see true in this — (for Giles de Lamourie, having sold his ample acres in Nova Scotia, and forgiven ancient grudges, has come here to live with Yvonne). Father Fafard, when he visits us from his Bonaventure parish, says the same; but *his* eyes are blind with loving prejudice. When we go into Montreal for the months of December and January, exchanging for a little the quiet of our country home for the glitter of rout and function, no other

court so choice, so loyal, and so revering as that which Yvonne gathers about her. The wise, drawn by her wit, are held fast by her beauty; while the gay, drawn by her beauty, rise to a worship of her wit and worth.

Yvonne's small hands are white and alive and restless as on that day in the Grand Pré orchard when, prying into the heart of the apple-blossom, they pried into and set fast hold upon the strings of my heart also. But this life of mine, given into the keeping of their sweet restlessness, has found the secret of rest.

One thing more of her, and I have done with this narrative; for they who live blest have little need or power to depict their happiness. It seems to me, in looking back and forward, that my wife delights particularly in setting at naught the cheap wisdom of the maxim-mongers. How continually are men heard to declare, with the tongue of Sir Oracle: "We don't woo what is well won"!

But Yvonne, well won these ten years back, I woo again continually, and our daily life together is never without the spur of fresh interest and further possibilities.

"The familiar is held cheap," say the disappointed; and "Use dulls the edge of passion," say they whose passion has never known the edge which finely tempered spirits take on.

But familiarity, the crucial intimacy of day by day companionship, only reveals to me in Yvonne the richer reasons for my reverence; while passion grows but the more poignant as it realizes the exhaustless depths of the nature which responds to it.

The mean poverty of these maxims I had half suspected even before I knew Yvonne. But one, more universally accepted, to the effect that "Anticipation beggars reality," had ever caused me a certain fear, lest it might prove true. The husband of my dear love has fathomed its falsehood, and anticipation, in my case, was little moderate in its demands. If there be any germ of truth under that long-triumphant lie, then the reason we two have not discovered it must be sought in another life than this. This life cannot be the full reality. Even so, my confident faith is that the lying adage will but seem to lie the more shamelessly under a fuller revelation. Many times have I told Yvonne that to me one life seemed not enough for love of her.

As I conclude, I look across the room to where the beautiful, dark, proud head bends over her desk; for she has outstripped me in my own art of letters, and only my old achievements with the sword enable me to maintain that dominance which the husband, even of Yvonne, ought to have.

She will not approve these last few pages. She will demand their erasure, declaring them extravagant and an offence against the reticence of true art.

But not one line will I expunge, for they are true.

THE END.